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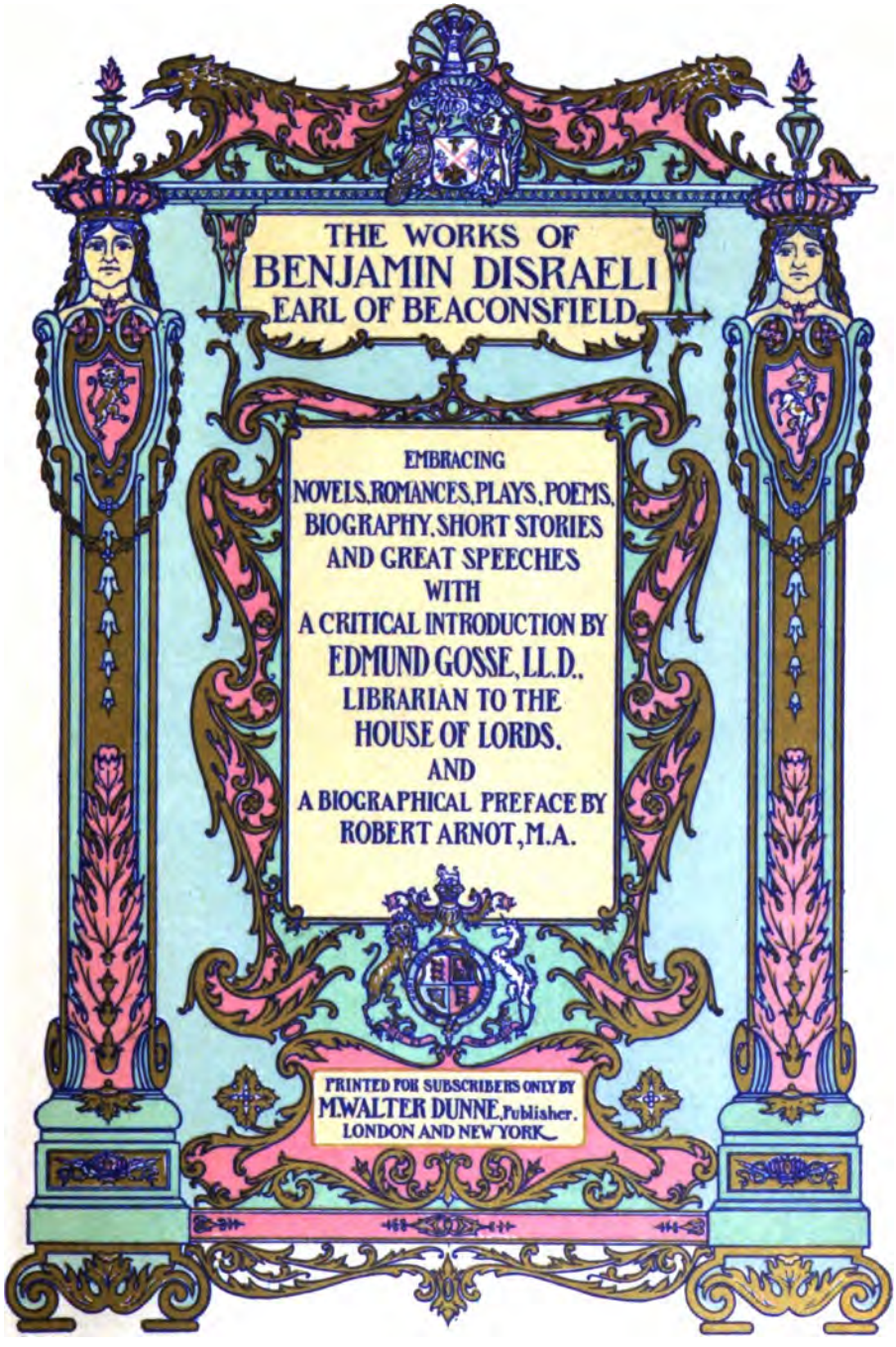

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AFTER AN ORIGINAL DRAWING BY HERMAN ROUNTREE.

A rather awful pause, and Mademoiselle Flora enters.

(See page 200.)

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CONINGSBY

OR

THE NEW GENERATION

BY

BENJAMIN DISRAELI
EARL OF BEACONSFIELD

VOLUME I.

M. WALTER DUNNE
NEW YORK AND LONDON

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TO HENRY HOPE

IT IS not because this work was conceived and partly executed amid the glades and galleries of the DEEPDENE that I have inscribed it with your name. Nor merely because I was desirous to avail myself of the most graceful privilege of an author, and dedicate my work to the friend whose talents I have always appreciated, and whose virtues I have ever admired.

But because in these pages I have endeavoured to picture something of that development of the new and, as I believe, better mind of England, that has often been the subject of our converse and speculation.

In this volume you will find many a thought illustrated and many a principle attempted to be established that we have often together partially discussed and canvassed. Doubtless you may encounter some opinions with which you may not agree, and some conclusions the accuracy of which you may find cause to question. But if I have generally succeeded in my object, to scatter some suggestions that may tend to elevate the tone of public life, ascertain the true character of political parties, and induce us for the future more carefully to distinguish between facts and phrases, realities and phantoms, I believe that I shall gain your sympathy, for I shall find a reflex to their efforts in your own generous spirit and enlightened mind.

GROSVENOR GATE:
May-Day, 1844.

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PREFACE

TO

THE FIFTH EDITION

Coningsby was published in the year 1844. The main purpose of its writer was to vindicate the just claims of the Tory party to be the popular political confederation of the country; a purpose which he had, more or less, pursued from a very early period of life. The occasion was favourable to the attempt. The youthful mind of England had just recovered from the inebriation of the great Conservative triumph of 1841, and was beginning to inquire what, after all, they had conquered to preserve. It was opportune, therefore, to show that Toryism was not a phrase, but a fact; and that our political institutions were the embodiment of our popular necessities. This the writer endeavoured to do without prejudice, and to treat of events and characters of which he had some personal experience, not altogether without the impartiality of the future.

It was not originally the intention of the writer to adopt the form of fiction as the instrument to scatter his suggestions, but, after reflection, he resolved to avail himself of a method which, in the temper of

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the times, offered the best chance of influencing opinion.

In considering the Tory scheme, the author recognised in the Church the most powerful agent in the previous development of England, and the most efficient means of that renovation of the national spirit at which he aimed. The Church is a sacred corporation for the promulgation and maintenance in Europe of certain Asian principles, which, although local in their birth, are of divine origin, and of universal and eternal application.

In asserting the paramount character of the ecclesiastical polity and the majesty of the theocratic principle, it became necessary to ascend to the origin of the Christian Church, and to meet in a spirit worthy of a critical and comparatively enlightened age, the position of the descendants of that race who were the founders of Christianity. Modern Jews had long laboured under the odium and stigma of mediæval malevolence. In the dark ages, when history was unknown, the passions of societies, undisturbed by traditionary experience, were strong, and their convictions, unmitigated by criticism, were necessarily fanatical. The Jews were looked upon in the middle ages as an accursed race, the enemies of God and man, the especial foes of Christianity. No one in those days paused to reflect that Christianity was founded by the Jews; that its Divine Author, in his human capacity, was a descendant of King David; that his doctrines avowedly were the completion, not the change, of Judaism; that the Apostles and the Evangelists, whose names men daily invoked, and whose volumes they embraced with reverence, were all Jews; that the infallible throne of Rome itself was

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established by a Jew; and that a Jew was the founder of the Christian Churches of Asia.

The European nations, relatively speaking, were then only recently converted to a belief in Moses and in Christ; and, as it were, still ashamed of the wild deities whom they had deserted, they thought they atoned for their past idolatry by wreaking their vengeance on a race to whom, and to whom alone, they were indebted for the Gospel they adored.

In vindicating the sovereign right of the Church of Christ to be the perpetual regenerator of man, the writer thought the time had arrived when some attempt should be made to do justice to the race which had founded Christianity.

The writer has developed in another work (*Tancred*) the views respecting the great house of Israel which he first intimated in *Conings by*. No one has attempted to refute them, nor is refutation possible; since all he has done is to examine certain facts in the truth of which all agree, and to draw from them irresistible conclusions which prejudice for a moment may shrink from, but which reason cannot refuse to admit.

D.

GROSVENOR GATE:
May, 1849.

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KEY TO THE PRINCIPAL CHARACTERS IN CONINGSBY

Coningsby	Lord Littleton
Rigby	Right Hon. J. Wilson Croker, M.P.
Taper	Charles Ross, Esq.
Tadpole	Alexander Pringle, Esq., M.P.
Lord Monmouth	Lord Hertford
The Duke of Beaumanoir	The Duke of Rutland
Lord Henry Sydney	Lord John Manners
Princess Colonna	Lady Strachan
Princess Lucretia	Madame Zichy
Lord Eskdale	Lord Lonsdale
Lucian Gay	Theodore Hook
Mr. Ormsby	Quentin Dick, Esq., M.P.
Sir Charles Buckhurst	Baillie Cochran, Esq., M.P.
Lord Vere	Lord Edward Howard
Oswald Millbank	Right Hon. William E. Gladstone, M.P.
Boots at Christopher	P. Borthwick, Esq., M.P.
The Duchess of Beaumanoir	Duchess of Rutland
Lord Fitz-Booby	Lord Hartington
Earwig	Sir G. Clark, Bart., M.P.
Lord Rambrooke	Lord Rosslyn
Tom Chudleigh	Augustus O'Brien, Esq., M.P.
Lord Everingham	Earl of Clarendon
Lady Everingham	Countess of Clarendon
Lady Theresa	Lady Adeliza Manners
Eustace Lyle	Ambrose Lisle Phillipps, Esq.
Marquess of Beaumanoir	Marquess of Granby
Mr. Melton	Hon. James Macdonald
Mr. G. O. A. Head	J. A. Roebuck, Esq., M.P.
Mr. Millbank	Mark Phillips, Esq., M.P.
Edith	Miss MacTavish

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Jawster Sharp	John Bright, Esq., M.P.
The Russian Ambassador .	Prince Lieven
The Russian Ambassadress	Princess Lieven
The Grand Duke	The Czarowitch (Nicholas II.)
Lady St. Julians	Lady Jersey
Lord Gaverstock	Lord Pollington
Lady Gaverstock	Lady Pollington
Villebecque	M. Laporte
Mr. Guy Flouncey . . .	Sir Charles Shackerly
Mrs. Guy Flouncey . . .	Mrs. Mountjoy Martin
Sidonia	Baron Lionel Nathan de Rothschild (also the Author)
Mr. Gingerly Browne . .	Captain Layard, M.P.
Mr. Juggins	Sir F. Booth
Sir Baptist Placid . . .	Sir Eardly Wilmot
Hon. Alberic de Crécy . .	Hon. Alberic Willoughby
Sir Joseph Wallinger . .	Sir William Clay
Duchess de G——t . . .	Duchess de Grammont
Count M——é	Count Molé
Baroness S. de R——d . .	Baroness S. de Rothschild
Duke D——s	Duc de Cases
Baron von H——t	Baron von Humboldt
Princess de Petitpoix . . .	Princess de Poix
Countess de C—s—l—ne .	Countess de Castellane
Mr. Cassilis	George Wombwell, Esq.
Canterton	Charles Mills, Esq.
Duke of Agincourt . . .	Duke of Buckingham and Chandos

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CONINGSBY

CHAPTER I.

Harry Coningsby.

IT WAS a bright May morning some twelve years ago, when a youth of still tender age, for he had certainly not entered his teens by more than two years, was ushered into the waiting-room of a house in the vicinity of St. James's Square, which, though with the general appearance of a private residence, and that too of no very ambitious character, exhibited at this period symptoms of being occupied for some public purpose.

The house-door was constantly open, and frequent guests even at this early hour crossed the threshold. The hall-table was covered with sealed letters; and the hall-porter inscribed in a book the name of every individual who entered.

The young gentleman we have mentioned found himself in a room which offered few resources for his amusement. A large table amply covered with writing materials, and a few chairs, were its sole furniture, except the grey drugget that covered the floor,

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and a muddy mezzotinto of the Duke of Wellington that adorned its cold walls. There was not even a newspaper; and the only books were the Court Guide and the London Directory. For some time he remained with patient endurance planted against the wall, with his feet resting on the rail of his chair; but at length in his shifting posture he gave evidence of his restlessness, rose from his seat, looked out of the window into a small side court of the house surrounded with dead walls, paced the room, took up the Court Guide, changed it for the London Directory, then wrote his name over several sheets of foolscap paper, drew various landscapes and faces of his friends; and then, splitting up a pen or two, delivered himself of a yawn which seemed the climax of his weariness.

And yet the youth's appearance did not betoken a character that, if the opportunity had offered, could not have found amusement and even instruction. His countenance, radiant with health and the lustre of innocence, was at the same time thoughtful and resolute. The expression of his deep blue eye was serious. Without extreme regularity of features, the face was one that would never have passed unobserved. His short upper lip indicated a good breed; and his chestnut curls clustered over his open brow, while his shirt-collar thrown over his shoulders was unrestrained by handkerchief or ribbon. Add to this, a limber and graceful figure, which the jacket of his boyish dress exhibited to great advantage.

Just as the youth, mounted on a chair, was adjusting the portrait of the Duke, which he had observed to be awry, the gentleman for whom he had been all this time waiting entered the room.

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'Floreat Etona!' hastily exclaimed the gentleman, in a sharp voice; 'you are setting the Duke to rights. I have left you a long time a prisoner; but I found them so busy here, that I made my escape with some difficulty.'

He who uttered these words was a man of middle size and age, originally in all probability of a spare habit, but now a little inclined to corpulency. Baldness, perhaps, contributed to the spiritual expression of a brow, which was, however, essentially intellectual, and gave some character of openness to a countenance which, though not ill-favoured, was unhappily stamped by a sinister cast that was not to be mistaken. His manner was easy, but rather audacious than well-bred. Indeed, while a visage which might otherwise be described as handsome was spoilt by a dishonest glance, so a demeanour that was by no means deficient in self-possession and facility, was tainted by an innate vulgarity, which in the long run, though seldom, yet surely developed itself.

The youth had jumped off his chair on the entrance of the gentleman, and then taking up his hat, said:

'Shall we go to grandpapa now, sir?'

'By all means, my dear boy,' said the gentleman, putting his arm within that of the youth; and they were just on the point of leaving the waiting-room, when the door was suddenly thrown open, and two individuals, in a state of great excitement, rushed into the apartment.

'Rigby! Rigby!' they both exclaimed at the same moment. 'By G— they're out!'

'Who told you?'

'The best authority; one of themselves.'

'Who? who?'

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'Paul, Evelyn; I met him as I passed Brooks's, and he told me that Lord Grey had resigned, and the King had accepted his resignation.'

But Mr. Rigby, who, though very fond of news, and much interested in the present, was extremely jealous of any one giving him information, was sceptical. He declared that Paul Evelyn was always wrong; that it was morally impossible that Paul Evelyn ever could be right; that he knew, from the highest authority, that Lord Grey had been twice yesterday with the King; that on the last visit nothing was settled; that if he had been at the palace again to-day, he could not have been there before twelve o'clock; that it was only now a quarter to one; that Lord Grey would have called his colleagues together on his return; that at least an hour must have elapsed before anything could possibly have transpired. Then he compared and criticised the dates of every rumoured incident of the last twenty-four hours, and nobody was stronger in dates than Mr. Rigby; counted even the number of stairs which the minister had to ascend and descend in his visit to the palace, and the time their mountings and dismountings must have consumed; detail was Mr. Rigby's forte; and finally, what with his dates, his private information, his knowledge of palace localities, his contempt for Paul Evelyn, and his confidence in himself, he succeeded in persuading his downcast and disheartened friends that their comfortable intelligence had not the slightest foundation.

They all left the room together; they were in the hall; the gentlemen who brought the news looked somewhat depressed, but Mr. Rigby gay, even amid the prostration of his party, from the consciousness

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that he had most critically demolished a piece of political gossip and conveyed a certain degree of mortification to a couple of his companions; when a travelling carriage and four with a ducal coronet drove up to the house. The door was thrown open, the steps dashed down, and a youthful noble sprang from his chariot into the hall.

'Good morning, Rigby,' said the Duke.

'I see your Grace well, I am sure,' said Mr. Rigby, with a softened manner.

'You have heard the news, gentlemen?' the Duke continued.

'What news? Yes; no; that is to say, Mr. Rigby thinks——'

'You know, of course, that Lord Lyndhurst is with the King?'

'It is impossible,' said Mr. Rigby.

'I don't think I can be mistaken,' said the Duke, smiling.

'I will show your Grace that it is impossible,' said Mr. Rigby. 'Lord Lyndhurst slept at Wimbledon. Lord Grey could not have seen the King until twelve o'clock; it is now five minutes to one. It is impossible, therefore, that any message from the King could have reached Lord Lyndhurst in time for his lordship to be at the palace at this moment.'

'But my authority is a high one,' said the Duke.

'Authority is a phrase,' said Mr. Rigby; 'we must look to time and place, dates and localities, to discover the truth.'

'Your Grace was saying that your authority——' ventured to observe Mr. Tadpole, emboldened by the presence of a duke, his patron, to struggle against the despotism of a Rigby, his tyrant.

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'Was the highest,' rejoined the Duke, smiling, 'for it was Lord Lyndhurst himself. I came up from Nuneham this morning, passed his lordship's house in Hyde Park Place as he was getting into his carriage in full dress, stopped my own, and learned in a breath that the Whigs were out, and that the King had sent for the Chief Baron. So I came on here at once.'

'I always thought the country was sound at bottom,' exclaimed Mr. Taper, who, under the old system, had sneaked into the Treasury Board.

Tadpole and Taper were great friends. Neither of them ever despaired of the Commonwealth. Even if the Reform Bill were passed, Taper was convinced that the Whigs would never prove men of business; and when his friends confessed among themselves that a Tory Government was for the future impossible, Taper would remark, in a confidential whisper, that for his part he believed before the year was over the Whigs would be turned out by the clerks.

'There is no doubt that there is considerable reaction,' said Mr. Tadpole. 'The infamous conduct of the Whigs in the Amersham case has opened the public mind more than anything.'

'Aldborough was worse,' said Mr. Taper.

'Terrible,' said Tadpole. 'They said there was no use discussing the Reform Bill in our House. I believe Rigby's great speech on Aldborough has done more towards the reaction than all the violence of the Political Unions put together.'

'Let us hope for the best,' said the Duke, mildly. ''Tis a bold step on the part of the Sovereign, and I am free to say I could have wished it postponed; but

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we must support the King like men. What say you, Rigby? You are silent.'

'I am thinking how very unfortunate it was that I did not breakfast with Lyndhurst this morning, as I was nearly doing, instead of going down to Eton.'

'To Eton! and why to Eton?'

'For the sake of my young friend here, Lord Monmouth's grandson. By-the-bye, you are kinsmen. Let me present to your Grace, MR. CONINGSBY.'

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CHAPTER II.

Coningsby at Eton.

THE political agitation which for a year and a half had shaken England to its centre, received, if possible, an increase to its intensity and virulence, when it was known, in the early part of the month of May, 1832, that the Prime Minister had tendered his resignation to the King, which resignation had been graciously accepted.

The amendment carried by the Opposition in the House of Lords on the evening of the 7th of May, that the enfranchising clauses of the Reform Bill should be considered before entering into the question of disfranchisement, was the immediate cause of this startling event. The Lords had previously consented to the second reading of the Bill with the view of preventing that large increase of their numbers with which they had been long menaced; rather, indeed, by mysterious rumours than by any official declaration; but, nevertheless, in a manner which had carried conviction to no inconsiderable portion of the Opposition that the threat was not without foundation.

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During the progress of the Bill through the Lower House, the journals which were looked upon as the organs of the ministry had announced, with unhesitating confidence, that Lord Grey was armed with what was then called a *carte blanche* to create any number of peers necessary to insure its success. But public journalists who were under the control of the ministry, and whose statements were never contradicted, were not the sole authorities for this prevailing belief. Members of the House of Commons, who were strong supporters of the cabinet, though not connected with it by any official tie, had unequivocally stated in their places that the Sovereign had not resisted the advice of his counsellors to create peers, if such creation were required to carry into effect what was then styled 'the great national measure.' In more than one instance, ministers had been warned that if they did not exercise that power with prompt energy they might deserve impeachment. And these intimations and announcements had been made in the presence of leading members of the Government, and had received from them, at least, the sanction of their silence.

It did not subsequently appear that the Reform ministers had been invested with any such power; but a conviction of the reverse, fostered by these circumstances, had successfully acted upon the nervous temperament, or the statesmen-like prudence, of a certain section of the peers, who consequently hesitated in their course; were known as being no longer inclined to pursue their policy of the preceding session; and had thus obtained a title at that moment in everybody's mouth, the title of 'THE WAVERERS.'

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Notwithstanding, therefore, the opposition of the Duke of Wellington and of Lord Lyndhurst, 'the Waverers' carried the second reading of the Reform Bill; and then, scared at the consequences of their own headstrong timidity, they went in a fright to the Duke and his able adviser to extricate them from the inevitable result of their own conduct. The ultimate device of these distracted counsels, where daring and poltroonery, principle and expediency, public spirit and private intrigue, each threw an ingredient into the turbulent spell, was the celebrated and successful amendment to which we have referred.

But the Whig ministers, who, whatever may have been their faults, were at least men of intellect and courage, were not to be beaten by 'the Waverers.' They might have made terms with an audacious foe; they trampled on a hesitating opponent. Lord Grey hastened to the palace.

Before the result of this appeal to the Sovereign was known, for its effects were not immediate, on the second morning after the vote in the House of Lords, Mr. Rigby had made that visit to Eton which had summoned very unexpectedly the youthful Coningsby to London. He was the orphan child of the youngest of the two sons of the Marquess of Monmouth. It was a family famous for its hatreds. The eldest son hated his father; and, it was said, in spite had married a lady to whom that father was attached, and with whom Lord Monmouth then meditated a second alliance. The eldest son lived at Naples, and had several children, but maintained no connection either with his parent or his native country. On the other hand, Lord Monmouth hated his younger son, who had married, against his consent, a woman to whom that

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son was devoted. A system of domestic persecution, sustained by the hand of a master, had eventually broken up the health of its victim, who died of a fever in a foreign country, where he had sought some refuge from his creditors.

His widow returned to England with her child; and, not having a relation, and scarcely an acquaintance in the world, made an appeal to her husband's father, the wealthiest noble in England, and a man who was often prodigal, and occasionally generous. After some time, and more trouble, after urgent and repeated, and what would have seemed heart-rending, solicitations, the attorney of Lord Monmouth called upon the widow of his client's son, and informed her of his lordship's decision. Provided she gave up her child, and permanently resided in one of the remotest counties, he was authorised to make her, in four quarterly payments, the yearly allowance of three hundred pounds, that being the income that Lord Monmouth, who was the shrewdest accountant in the country, had calculated a lone woman might very decently exist upon in a small market town in the county of Westmoreland.

Desperate necessity, the sense of her own forlornness, the utter impossibility to struggle with an omnipotent foe, who, her husband had taught her, was above all scruples, prejudices, and fears, and who, though he respected law, despised opinion, made the victim yield. But her sufferings were not long; the separation from her child, the bleak clime, the strange faces around her, sharp memory, and the dull routine of an unimpassioned life, all combined to wear out a constitution originally frail, and since shattered by many sorrows. Mrs. Coningsby died

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the same day that her father-in-law was made a Marquess. He deserved his honours. The four votes he had inherited in the House of Commons had been increased, by his intense volition and unsparing means, to ten; and the very day he was raised to his Marquisate, he commenced sapping fresh corporations, and was working for the strawberry leaf. His honours were proclaimed in the London Gazette, and her decease was not even noticed in the County Chronicle; but the altars of Nemesis are beneath every outraged roof, and the death of this unhappy lady, apparently without an earthly friend or an earthly hope, desolate and deserted, and dying in obscure poverty, was not forgotten.

Coningsby was not more than nine years of age when he lost his last parent; and he had then been separated from her for nearly three years. But he remembered the sweetness of his nursery days. His mother, too, had written to him frequently since he quitted her, and her fond expressions had cherished the tenderness of his heart. He wept bitterly when his schoolmaster broke to him the news of his mother's death. True it was they had been long parted, and their prospect of again meeting was vague and dim; but his mother seemed to him his only link to human society. It was something to have a mother, even if he never saw her. Other boys went to see their mothers! he, at least, could talk of his. Now he was alone. His grandfather was to him only a name. Lord Monmouth resided almost constantly abroad, and during his rare visits to England had found no time or inclination to see the orphan, with whom he felt no sympathy. Even the death of the boy's mother, and the consequent arrangements, were notified to his

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master by a stranger. The letter which brought the sad intelligence was from Mr. Rigby. It was the first time that name had been known to Coningsby.

Mr. Rigby was member for one of Lord Monmouth's boroughs. He was the manager of Lord Monmouth's parliamentary influence, and the auditor of his vast estates. He was more; he was Lord Monmouth's companion when in England, his correspondent when abroad; hardly his counsellor, for Lord Monmouth never required advice; but Mr. Rigby could instruct him in matters of detail, which Mr. Rigby made amusing. Rigby was not a professional man; indeed, his origin, education, early pursuits, and studies, were equally obscure; but he had contrived in good time to squeeze himself into parliament, by means of which no one could ever comprehend, and then set up to be a perfect man of business. The world took him at his word, for he was bold, acute, and voluble; with no thought, but a good deal of desultory information; and though destitute of all imagination and noble sentiment, was blessed with a vigorous mendacious fancy, fruitful in small expedients, and never happier than when devising shifts for great men's scrapes.

They say that all of us have one chance in this life, and so it was with Rigby. After a struggle of many years, after a long series of the usual alternatives of small successes and small failures, after a few cleverish speeches and a good many cleverish pamphlets, with a considerable reputation, indeed, for pasquinades, most of which he never wrote, and articles in reviews to which it was whispered he had contributed, Rigby, who had already intrigued himself into a subordinate office, met with Lord Monmouth.

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He was just the animal that Lord Monmouth wanted, for Lord Monmouth always looked upon human nature with the callous eye of a jockey. He surveyed Rigby, and he determined to buy him. He bought him; with his clear head, his indefatigable industry, his audacious tongue, and his ready and unscrupulous pen; with all his dates, all his lampoons; all his private memoirs, and all his political intrigues. It was a good purchase. Rigby became a great personage, and Lord Monmouth's man.

Mr. Rigby, who liked to be doing a great many things at the same time, and to astonish the Tadpoles and Tapers with his energetic versatility, determined to superintend the education of Coningsby. It was a relation which identified him with the noble house of his pupil, or, properly speaking, his charge: for Mr. Rigby affected rather the graceful dignity of the governor than the duties of a tutor. The boy was recalled from his homely, rural school, where he had been well grounded by a hard-working curate, and affectionately tended by the curate's unsophisticated wife. He was sent to a fashionable school preparatory to Eton, where he found about two hundred youths of noble families and connections, lodged in a magnificent villa, that had once been the retreat of a minister, superintended by a sycophantic Doctor of Divinity, already well beneficed, and not despairing of a bishopric by favouring the children of the great nobles. The doctor's lady, clothed in cashmeres, sometimes inquired after their health, and occasionally received a report as to their linen.

Mr. Rigby had a classical retreat, not distant from this establishment, which he esteemed a Tusculum. There, surrounded by his busts and books, he wrote his

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lampoons and articles; massacred a she Liberal (it was thought that no one could lash a woman like Rigby), cut up a rising genius whose politics were different from his own, or scarified some unhappy wretch who had brought his claims before parliament, proving, by garbled extracts from official correspondence that no one could refer to, that the malcontent instead of being a victim, was, on the contrary, a defaulter. Tadpole and Taper would back Rigby for a 'slashing reply' against the field. Here, too, at the end of a busy week, he found it occasionally convenient to entertain a clever friend or two of equivocal reputation, with whom he had become acquainted in former days of equal brotherhood. No one was more faithful to his early friends than Mr. Rigby, particularly if they could write a squib.

It was in this refined retirement that Mr. Rigby found time enough, snatched from the toils of official life and parliamentary struggles, to compose a letter on the study of History, addressed to Coningsby. The style was as much like that of Lord Bolingbroke as if it had been written by the authors of the 'Rejected Addresses,' and it began, 'My dear young friend.' This polished composition, so full of good feeling and comprehensive views, and all in the best taste, was not published. It was only privately printed, and a few thousand copies were distributed among select personages as an especial favour and mark of high consideration. Each copy given away seemed to Rigby like a certificate of character; a property which, like all men of dubious repute, he thoroughly appreciated. Rigby intrigued very much that the head-master of Eton should adopt his discourse as a class-book. For this purpose he dined with the

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Doctor, told him several anecdotes of the King, which intimated personal influence at Windsor; but the head-master was inflexible, and so Mr. Rigby was obliged to be content with having his Letter on History canonized as a classic in the Preparatory Seminary, where the individual to whom it was addressed was a scholar.

This change in the life of Coningsby contributed to his happiness. The various characters which a large school exhibited interested a young mind whose active energies were beginning to stir. His previous acquirements made his studies light; and he was fond of sports, in which he was qualified to excel. He did not particularly like Mr. Rigby. There was something jarring and grating in that gentleman's voice and modes, from which the chords of the young heart shrank. He was not tender, though perhaps he wished to be; scarcely kind: but he was good-natured, at least to children. However, this connection was, on the whole, an agreeable one for Coningsby. He seemed suddenly to have friends; he never passed his holidays again at school. Mr. Rigby was so clever that he contrived always to quarter Coningsby on the father of one of his school-fellows, for Mr. Rigby knew all his school-fellows and all their fathers. Mr. Rigby also called to see him, not unfrequently would give him a dinner at the Star and Garter, or even have him up to town for a week at Whitehall. Compared with his former forlorn existence, these were happy days, when he was placed under the gallery as a member's son, or went to the play with the butler!

When Coningsby had attained his twelfth year, an order was received from Lord Monmouth, who was

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at Rome, that he should go at once to Eton. This was the first great epoch of his life. There never was a youth who entered into that wonderful little world with more eager zest than Coningsby. Nor was it marvellous.

That delicious plain, studded with every creation of graceful culture; hamlet and hall, and grange; garden and grove, and park; that castle-palace, grey with glorious ages; those antique spires, hoar with faith and wisdom, the chapel and the college; that river winding through the shady meads; the sunny glade and the solemn avenue; the room in the Dame's house where we first order our own breakfast and first feel we are free; the stirring multitude, the energetic groups, the individual mind that leads, conquers, controls; the emulation and the affection; the noble strife and the tender sentiment; the daring exploit and the dashing scrape; the passion that pervades our life, and breathes in everything, from the aspiring study to the inspiring sport: oh! what hereafter can spur the brain and touch the heart like this; can give us a world so deeply and variously interesting; a life so full of quick and bright excitement, passed in a scene so fair?

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CHAPTER III.

A Trying Ordeal.

ORD MONMOUTH, who detested popular tumults as much as he despised public opinion, had remained during the agitating year of 1831 in his luxurious retirement in Italy, contenting himself with opposing the Reform Bill by proxy. But when his correspondent, Mr. Rigby, had informed him, in the early part of the spring of 1832, of the probability of a change in the tactics of the Tory party, and that an opinion was becoming prevalent among their friends, that the great scheme must be defeated in detail rather than again withstood on principle, his lordship, who was never wanting in energy when his own interests were concerned, immediately crossed the Alps, and travelled rapidly to England. He indulged a hope that the weight of his presence and the influence of his strong character, which was at once shrewd and courageous, might induce his friends to relinquish their half measure, a course to which his nature was repugnant. At all events, if they persisted in their intention, and the Bill went into committee, his presence was indispensable, for in that stage of a parliamentary proceeding proxies become ineffective.

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The counsels of Lord Monmouth, though they coincided with those of the Duke of Wellington, did not prevail with 'the Waverers.' Several of these high-minded personages had had their windows broken, and they were of opinion that a man who lived at Naples was not a competent judge of the state of public feeling in England. Besides, the days are gone by for senates to have their beards plucked in the forum. We live in an age of prudence. The leaders of the people, now, generally follow. The truth is, the peers were in a fright. 'Twas a pity; there is scarcely a less dignified entity than a patrician in a panic.

Among the most intimate companions of Coningsby at Eton, was Lord Henry Sydney, his kinsman. Coningsby had frequently passed his holidays of late at Beaumanoir, the seat of the Duke, Lord Henry's father. The Duke sat next to Lord Monmouth during the debate on the enfranchising question, and to while away the time, and from kindness of disposition, spoke, and spoke with warmth and favour, of his grandson. The polished Lord Monmouth bowed as if he were much gratified by this notice of one so dear to him. He had too much tact to admit that he had never yet seen his grandchild; but he asked some questions as to his progress and pursuits, his tastes and habits, which intimated the interest of an affectionate relative.

Nothing, however, was ever lost upon Lord Monmouth. No one had a more retentive memory, or a more observant mind. And the next day, when he received Mr. Rigby at his morning levee — Lord Monmouth performed this ceremony in the high style of the old court, and welcomed his visitors in bed — he

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said with imperturbable calmness, as if he had been talking of trying a new horse, 'Rigby, I should like to see the boy at Eton.'

There might be some objection to grant leave to Coningsby at this moment; but it was a rule with Mr. Rigby never to make difficulties, or at least to persuade his patron that he, and he only, could remove them. He immediately undertook that the boy should be forthcoming, and notwithstanding the excitement of the moment, he went off next morning to fetch him.

They arrived in town rather early; and Rigby, wishing to know how affairs were going on, ordered the servant to drive immediately to the head-quarters of the party; where a permanent committee watched every phasis of the impending revolution; and where every member of the Opposition, of note and trust, was instantly admitted to receive or to impart intelligence.

It was certainly not without emotion that Coningsby contemplated his first interview with his grandfather. All his experience of the ties of relationship, however limited, was full of tenderness and rapture. His memory often dwelt on his mother's sweet embrace; and ever and anon a fitful phantom of some past passage of domestic love haunted his gushing heart. The image of his father was less fresh in his mind; but still it was associated with a vague sentiment of kindness and joy; and the allusions to her husband in his mother's letters had cherished these impressions. To notice lesser sources of influence in his estimate of the domestic tie, he had witnessed under the roof of Beaumanoir the existence of a family bound together by the most beautiful affections.

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He could not forget how Henry Sydney was embraced by his sisters when he returned home; what frank and fraternal love existed between his kinsman and his elder brother; how affectionately the kind Duke had welcomed his son once more to the house where they had both been born; and the dim eyes, and saddened brows, and tones of tenderness, which rather looked than said farewell, when they went back to Eton.

And these rapturous meetings and these mournful adieus were occasioned only by a separation at the most of a few months, softened by constant correspondence and the communication of mutual sympathy. But Coningsby was to meet a relation, his near, almost his only, relation, for the first time; the relation, too, to whom he owed maintenance, education; it might be said, existence. It was a great incident for a great drama; something tragical in the depth and stir of its emotions. Even the imagination of the boy could not be insensible to its materials; and Coningsby was picturing to himself a beneficent and venerable gentleman pressing to his breast an agitated youth, when his reverie was broken by the carriage stopping before the gates of Monmouth House.

The gates were opened by a gigantic Swiss, and the carriage rolled into a huge court-yard. At its end Coningsby beheld a Palladian palace, with wings and colonnades encircling the court.

A double flight of steps led into a circular and marble hall, adorned with colossal busts of the Cæsars; the staircase in fresco by Sir James Thornhill, breathed with the loves and wars of gods and heroes. It led into a vestibule, painted in arabesque, hung with Venetian girandoles, and looking into gardens.

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Opening a door in this chamber, and proceeding some little way down a corridor, Mr. Rigby and his companion arrived at the base of a private staircase. Ascending a few steps, they reached a landing-place hung with tapestry. Drawing this aside, Mr. Rigby opened a door, and ushered Coningsby through an ante-chamber into a small saloon, of beautiful proportions, and furnished in a brilliant and delicate taste.

'You will find more to amuse you here than where you were before,' said Mr. Rigby, 'and I shall not be nearly so long absent.' So saying, he entered into an inner apartment.

The walls of the saloon, which were covered with light blue satin, held, in silver panels, portraits of beautiful women, painted by Boucher. Couches and easy chairs of every shape invited in every quarter to luxurious repose; while amusement was afforded by tables covered with caricatures, French novels, and endless miniatures of foreign dancers, princesses, and sovereigns.

But Coningsby was so impressed with the impending interview with his grandfather, that he neither sought nor required diversion. Now that the crisis was at hand, he felt agitated and nervous, and wished that he was again at Eton. The suspense was sickening, yet he dreaded still more the summons. He was not long alone; the door opened; he started, grew pale; he thought it was his grandfather; it was not even Mr. Rigby. It was Lord Monmouth's valet.

'Monsieur Konigby?'

'My name is Coningsby,' said the boy.

'Milor is ready to receive you,' said the valet.

Coningsby sprang forward with that desperation which the scaffold requires. His face was pale; his

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hand was moist; his heart beat with tumult. He had occasionally been summoned by Dr. Keate; that, too, was awful work, but, compared with the present, a morning visit. Music, artillery, the roar of cannon, and the blare of trumpets, may urge a man on to a forlorn hope; ambition, one's constituents, the hell of previous failure, may prevail on us to do a more desperate thing—speak in the House of Commons; but there are some situations in life, such, for instance, as entering the room of a dentist, in which the prostration of the nervous system is absolute.

The moment had at length arrived when the desolate was to find a benefactor, the forlorn a friend, the orphan a parent; when the youth, after a childhood of adversity, was to be formally received into the bosom of the noble house from which he had been so long estranged, and at length to assume that social position to which his lineage entitled him. Manliness might support, affection might soothe, the happy anguish of such a meeting; but it was undoubtedly one of those situations which stir up the deep fountains of our nature, and before which the conventional proprieties of our ordinary manners instantaneously vanish.

Coningsby with an uncertain step followed his guide through a bed-chamber, the sumptuousness of which he could not notice, into the dressing-room of Lord Monmouth. Mr. Rigby, facing Coningsby as he entered, was leaning over the back of a large chair, from which as Coningsby was announced by the valet, the Lord of the house slowly rose, for he was suffering slightly from the gout, his left hand resting on an ivory stick. Lord Monmouth was in height above the middle size, but somewhat portly and cor-

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pulent. His countenance was strongly marked; sagacity on the brow, sensuality in the mouth and jaw. His head was bald, but there were remains of the rich brown locks on which he once prided himself. His large deep blue eyes, madid and yet piercing, showed that the secretions of his brain were apportioned, half to voluptuousness, half to common sense. But his general mien was truly grand; full of a natural nobility, of which no one was more sensible than himself. Lord Monmouth was not in *déshabille;* on the contrary, his costume was exact, and even careful. Rising as we have mentioned when his grandson entered, and leaning with his left hand on his ivory cane, he made Coningsby such a bow as Louis Quatorze might have bestowed on the ambassador of the United Provinces. Then extending his right hand, which the boy tremblingly touched, Lord Monmouth said:

'How do you like Eton?'

This contrast to the reception which he had imagined, hoped, feared, paralysed the reviving energies of young Coningsby. He felt stupefied; he looked almost aghast. In the chaotic tumult of his mind, his memory suddenly seemed to receive some miraculous inspiration. Mysterious phrases heard in his earliest boyhood, unnoticed then, long since forgotten, rose to his ear. Who was this grandfather, seen not before, seen now for the first time? Where was the intervening link of blood between him and this superb and icy being? The boy sank into the chair which had been placed for him, and leaning on the table burst into tears.

Here was a business! If there were one thing which would have made Lord Monmouth travel from London to Naples at four-and-twenty hours' notice, it

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AFTER AN ORIGINAL DRAWING BY HERMAN ROUNTREE.

The boy sank into the chair which had been placed for him, and leaning on the table burst into tears.

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was to avoid a scene. He hated scenes. He hated feelings. He saw instantly the mistake he had made in sending for his grandchild. He was afraid that Coningsby was tender-hearted like his father. Another tender-hearted Coningsby! Unfortunate family! Degenerate race! He decided in his mind that Coningsby must be provided for in the Church, and looked at Mr. Rigby, whose principal business it always was to disembarrass his patron from the disagreeable.

Mr. Rigby instantly came forward and adroitly led the boy into the adjoining apartment, Lord Monmouth's bed-chamber, closing the door of the dressing-room behind him.

'My dear young friend,' said Mr. Rigby, 'what is all this?'

A sob the only answer.

'What can be the matter?' said Mr. Rigby.

'I was thinking,' said Coningsby, 'of poor mamma!'

'Hush!' said Mr. Rigby; 'Lord Monmouth never likes to hear of people who are dead; so you must take care never to mention your mother or your father.'

In the meantime Lord Monmouth had decided on the fate of Coningsby. The Marquis thought he could read characters by a glance, and in general he was successful, for his natural sagacity had been nurtured by great experience. His grandson was not to his taste; amiable, no doubt, but spooney.

We are too apt to believe that the character of a boy is easily read. 'Tis a mystery the most profound. Mark what blunders parents constantly make as to the nature of their own offspring, bred, too, under

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their eyes, and displaying every hour their characteristics. How often in the nursery does the genius count as a dunce because he is pensive; while a rattling urchin is invested with almost supernatural qualities because his animal spirits make him impudent and flippant! The schoolboy, above all others, is not the simple being the world imagines. In that young bosom are often stirring passions as strong as our own, desires not less violent, a volition not less supreme. In that young bosom what burning love, what intense ambition, what avarice, what lust of power; envy that fiends might emulate, hate that man might fear!

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CHAPTER IV.

The Princess Colonna.

'COME,' said Mr. Rigby, when Coningsby was somewhat composed, 'come with me and we will see the house.'

So they descended once more the private staircase, and again entered the vestibule.

'If you had seen these gardens when they were illuminated for a fête to George IV.,' said Rigby, as crossing the chamber he ushered his charge into the state apartments. The splendour and variety of the surrounding objects soon distracted the attention of the boy, for the first time in the palace of his fathers. He traversed saloon after saloon hung with rare tapestry and the gorgeous products of foreign looms; filled with choice pictures and creations of curious art; cabinets that sovereigns might envy, and colossal vases of malachite presented by emperors. Coningsby alternately gazed up to ceilings glowing with colour and with gold, and down upon carpets bright with the fancies and vivid with the tints of Aubusson and of Axminster.

'This grandfather of mine is a great prince,' thought Coningsby, as musing he stood before a por-

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trait in which he recognised the features of the being from whom he had so recently and so strangely parted. There he stood, Philip Augustus, Marquess of Monmouth, in his robes of state, with his new coronet on a table near him, a despatch lying at hand that indicated the special mission of high ceremony of which he had been the illustrious envoy, and the garter beneath his knee.

'You will have plenty of opportunities to look at the pictures,' said Rigby, observing that the boy had now quite recovered himself. 'Some luncheon will do you no harm after our drive;' and he opened the door of another apartment.

It was a pretty room adorned with a fine picture of the chase; at a round table in the centre sat two ladies interested in the meal to which Rigby had alluded.

'Ah, Mr. Rigby!' said the elder, yet young and beautiful, and speaking, though with fluency, in a foreign accent, 'come and tell me some news. Have you seen Milor?' and then she threw a scrutinising glance from a dark flashing eye at his companion.

'Let me present to your Highness,' said Rigby, with an air of some ceremony, 'Mr. Coningsby.'

'My dear young friend,' said the lady, extending her white hand with an air of joyous welcome, 'this is Lucretia, my daughter. We love you already. Lord Monmouth will be so charmed to see you. What beautiful eyes he has, Mr. Rigby. Quite like Milor.'

The young lady, who was really more youthful than Coningsby, but of a form and stature so developed that she appeared almost a woman, bowed to the guest with some ceremony, and a faint sullen smile, and then proceeded with her Perigord pie.

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'You must be so hungry after your drive,' said the elder lady, placing Coningsby at her side, and herself filling his plate.

This was true enough; and while Mr. Rigby and the lady talked an infinite deal about things which he did not understand, and persons of whom he had never heard, our little hero made his first meal in his paternal house with no ordinary zest; and renovated by the pasty and a glass of sherry, felt altogether a different being from what he was when he had undergone the terrible interview in which he began to reflect he had considerably exposed himself. His courage revived, his senses rallied, he replied to the interrogations of the lady with calmness, but with promptness and propriety. It was evident that he had made a favourable impression on her Highness, for ever and anon she put a truffle or some small delicacy in his plate, and insisted upon his taking some particular confection, because it was a favourite of her own. When she rose, she said,—

'In ten minutes the carriage will be at the door; and if you like, my dear young friend, you shall be our beau.'

'There is nothing I should like so much,' said Coningsby.

'Ah!' said the lady, with the sweetest smile, 'he is frank.'

The ladies bowed and retired; Mr. Rigby returned to the Marquess, and the groom of the chambers led Coningsby to his room.

This lady, so courteous to Coningsby, was the Princess Colonna, a Roman dame, the second wife of Prince Paul Colonna. The Prince had first married when a boy, and into a family not inferior to his

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own. Of this union, in every respect unhappy, the Princess Lucretia was the sole offspring. He was a man dissolute and devoted to play; and cared for nothing much but his pleasures and billiards, in which latter he was esteemed unrivalled. According to some, in a freak of passion, according to others, to cancel a gambling debt, he had united himself to his present wife, whose origin was obscure; but with whom he contrived to live on terms of apparent cordiality, for she was much admired, and made the society of her husband sought by those who contributed to his enjoyment. Among these especially figured the Marquess of Monmouth, between whom and Prince Colonna the world recognised as existing the most intimate and entire friendship, so that his Highness and his family were frequent guests under the roof of the English nobleman, and now accompanied him on a visit to England.

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CHAPTER V.

Anxious Politicians.

IN THE meantime, while ladies are lunching on Perigord pie, or coursing in whirling britskas, performing all the singular ceremonies of a London morning in the heart of the season, making visits where nobody is seen, and making purchases which are not wanted, the world is in agitation and uproar. At present the world and the confusion are limited to St. James's Street and Pall Mall; but soon the boundaries and the tumult will be extended to the intended metropolitan boroughs; to-morrow they will spread over the manufacturing districts. It is perfectly evident that before eight-and-forty hours have passed, the country will be in a state of fearful crisis. And how can it be otherwise? Is it not a truth that the subtle Chief Baron has been closeted one whole hour with the King; that shortly after, with thoughtful brow and compressed lip, he was marked in his daring chariot entering the courtyard of Apsley House? Great was the panic at Brooks's, wild the hopes of Carlton Terrace; all the gentlemen who expected to have been made peers perceived that the country was going to be given over to a rapacious oligarchy.

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In the meantime Tadpole and Taper, who had never quitted for an instant the mysterious head-quarters of the late Opposition, were full of hopes and fears, and asked many questions, which they chiefly answered themselves.

'I wonder what Lord Lyndhurst will say to the King,' said Taper.

'He has plenty of pluck,' said Tadpole.

'I almost wish now that Rigby had breakfasted with him this morning,' said Taper.

'If the King be firm, and the country sound,' said Tadpole, 'and Lord Monmouth keep his boroughs, I should not wonder to see Rigby made a privy councillor.'

'There is no precedent for an under-secretary being a privy councillor,' said Taper.

'But we live in revolutionary times,' said Tadpole.

'Gentlemen,' said the groom of the chambers, in a loud voice, entering the room, 'I am desired to state that the Duke of Wellington is with the King.'

'There *is* a Providence!' exclaimed an agitated gentleman, the patent of whose intended peerage had not been signed the day that the Duke had quitted office in 1830.

'I always thought the King would be firm,' said Mr. Tadpole.

'I wonder who will have the India Board,' said Taper.

At this moment three or four gentlemen entered the room in a state of great bustle and excitement; they were immediately surrounded.

'Is it true?' 'Quite true; not the slightest doubt. Saw him myself. Not at all hissed; certainly not

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hooted. Perhaps a little hissed. One fellow really cheered him. Saw him myself. Say what they like, there *is* reaction.' 'But Constitution Hill, they say?' 'Well, there was a sort of inclination to a row on Constitution Hill; but the Duke quite firm; pistols and carriage doors bolted.'

Such may give a faint idea of the anxious inquiries and the satisfactory replies that were occasioned by the entrance of this group.

'"Up, guards, and at them!"' exclaimed Tadpole, rubbing his hands in a fit of patriotic enthusiasm.

Later in the afternoon, about five o'clock, the high change of political gossip, when the room was crowded, and every one had his rumour, Mr. Rigby looked in again to throw his eye over the evening papers, and catch in various chit-chat the tone of public or party feeling on the 'crisis.' Then it was known that the Duke had returned from the King, having accepted the charge of forming an administration. An administration to do what? Portentous question! Were concessions to be made? And if so, what? Was it altogether impossible, and too late, *stare super vias antiquas?* Questions altogether above your Tadpoles and your Tapers, whose idea of the necessities of the age was that they themselves should be in office.

Lord Eskdale came up to Mr. Rigby. This peer was a noble Crœsus, acquainted with all the gradations of life; a voluptuary who could be a Spartan; clear-sighted, unprejudiced, sagacious; the best judge in the world of a horse or a man; he was the universal referee; a quarrel about a bet or a mistress was solved by him in a moment, and in a manner

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which satisfied both parties. He patronised and appreciated the fine arts, though a jockey; respected literary men, though he read only French novels; and without any affectation of tastes which he did not possess, was looked upon by every singer and dancer in Europe as their natural champion. The secret of his strong character and great influence was his self-composure, which an earthquake or a Reform Bill could not disturb, and which in him was the result of temperament and experience. He was an intimate acquaintance of Lord Monmouth, for they had many tastes in common; were both men of considerable, and in some degree similar, abilities; and were the two greatest proprietors of close boroughs in the country.

'Do you dine at Monmouth House to-day?' inquired Lord Eskdale of Mr. Rigby.

'Where I hope to meet your lordship. The Whig papers are very subdued,' continued Mr. Rigby.

'Ah! they have not the cue yet,' said Lord Eskdale.

'And what do you think of affairs?' inquired his companion.

'I think the hounds are too hot to hark off now,' said Lord Eskdale.

'There is one combination,' said Rigby, who seemed meditating an attack on Lord Eskdale's button.

'Give it us at dinner,' said Lord Eskdale, who knew his man, and made an adroit movement forward, as if he were very anxious to see the *Globe* newspaper.

In the course of two or three hours these gentlemen met again in the green drawing-room of Monmouth House. Mr. Rigby was sitting on the sofa by

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Lord Monmouth, detailing in whispers all his gossip of the morn: Lord Eskdale murmuring quaint inquiries into the ear of the Princess Lucretia. Madame Colonna made remarks alternately to two gentlemen, who paid her assiduous court. One of these was Mr. Ormsby; the school, the college, and the club crony of Lord Monmouth, who had been his shadow through life; travelled with him in early days, won money with him at play, had been his colleague in the House of Commons; and was still one of his nominees. Mr. Ormsby was a millionaire, which Lord Monmouth liked. He liked his companions to be very rich or very poor; to be his equals, able to play with him at high stakes, or join him in a great speculation; or to be his tools, and to amuse and serve him. There was nothing which he despised and disliked so much as a moderate fortune.

The other gentleman was of a different class and character. Nature had intended Lucian Gay for a scholar and a wit; necessity had made him a scribbler and a buffoon. He had distinguished himself at the University; but he had no patrimony, nor those powers of perseverance which success in any learned profession requires. He was good-looking, had great animal spirits, and a keen sense of enjoyment, and could not drudge. Moreover he had a fine voice, and sang his own songs with considerable taste; accomplishments which made his fortune in society and completed his ruin. In due time he extricated himself from the bench and merged into journalism, by means of which he chanced to become acquainted with Mr. Rigby. That worthy individual was not slow in detecting the treasure he had lighted on; a wit, a ready and happy writer, a joyous and tractable being, with

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the education, and still the feelings and manners, of a gentleman. Frequent were the Sunday dinners which found Gay a guest at Mr. Rigby's villa; numerous the airy pasquinades which he left behind, and which made the fortune of his patron. Flattered by the familiar acquaintance of a man of station, and sanguine that he had found the link which would sooner or later restore him to the polished world that he had forfeited, Gay laboured in his vocation with enthusiasm and success. Willingly would Rigby have kept his treasure to himself; and truly he hoarded it for a long time, but it oozed out. Rigby loved the reputation of possessing the complete art of society. His dinners were celebrated at least for their guests. Great intellectual illustrations were found there blended with rank and high station. Rigby loved to patronise; to play the minister unbending and seeking relief from the cares of council in the society of authors, artists, and men of science. He liked dukes to dine with him and hear him scatter his audacious criticisms to Sir Thomas or Sir Humphry. They went away astounded by the powers of their host, who, had he not fortunately devoted those powers to their party, must apparently have rivalled Vandyke, or discovered the safety-lamp.

Now in these dinners, Lucian Gay, who had brilliant conversational powers, and who possessed all the resources of boon companionship, would be an invaluable ally. He was therefore admitted, and inspired both by the present enjoyment, and the future to which it might lead, his exertions were untiring, various, most successful. Rigby's dinners became still more celebrated. It, however, necessarily followed that the guests who were charmed by Gay, wished

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Gay also to be their guest. Rigby was very jealous of this, but it was inevitable; still, by constant manœuvre, by intimations of some exercise, some day or other, of substantial patronage in his behalf, by a thousand little arts by which he carved out work for Gay which often prevented him accepting invitations to great houses in the country, by judicious loans of small sums on Lucian's notes of hand and other analogous devices, Rigby contrived to keep the wit in a fair state of bondage and dependence.

One thing Rigby was resolved on: Gay should never get into Monmouth House. That was an empyrean too high for his wing to soar in. Rigby kept that social monopoly distinctively to mark the relation that subsisted between them as patron and client. It was something to swagger about when they were together after their second bottle of claret. Rigby kept his resolution for some years, which the frequent and prolonged absence of the Marquess rendered not very difficult. But we are the creatures of circumstances; at least the Rigby race particularly. Lord Monmouth returned to England one year, and wanted to be amused. He wanted a jester: a man about him who would make him, not laugh, for that was impossible, but smile more frequently, tell good stories, say good things, and sing now and then, especially French songs. Early in life Rigby would have attempted all this, though he had neither fun, voice, nor ear. But his hold on Lord Monmouth no longer depended on the mere exercise of agreeable qualities; he had become indispensable to his lordship by more serious if not higher considerations. And what with auditing his accounts, guarding his boroughs, writing him, when absent, gossip by every

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post, and when in England deciding on every question and arranging every matter which might otherwise have ruffled the sublime repose of his patron's existence, Rigby might be excused if he shrank a little from the minor part of table wit, particularly when we remember all his subterranean journalism, his acid squibs, and his malicious paragraphs, and what Tadpole called his 'slashing articles.'

The 'slashing articles' were, indeed, things which, had they appeared as anonymous pamphlets, would have obtained the contemptuous reception which, in an intellectual view, no compositions more surely deserved; but whispered as the productions of one behind the scenes, and appearing in the pages of a party review, they were passed off as genuine coin, and took in great numbers of the lieges, especially in the country. They were written in a style apparently modelled on the briefs of those sharp attorneys who weary advocates with their clever commonplace; teasing with obvious comment, and torturing with inevitable inference. The affectation of order in the statement of facts had all the lucid method of an adroit pettifogger. They dealt much in extracts from newspapers, quotations from the *Annual Register*, parallel passages in forgotten speeches, arranged with a formidable array of dates rarely accurate. When the writer was of opinion he had made a point, you may be sure the hit was in italics, that last resource of the Forcible Feebles. He handled a particular in chronology as if he were proving an alibi at the Criminal Court. The censure was coarse without being strong, and vindictive when it would have been sarcastic. Now and then there was a passage which aimed at a higher flight, and nothing can be con-

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ceived more unlike genuine feeling, or more offensive to pure taste. And yet, perhaps, the most ludicrous characteristic of these factious gallimaufreys was an occasional assumption of the high moral and admonitory tone, which, when we recurred to the general spirit of the discourse, and were apt to recall the character of its writer, irresistibly reminded one of Mrs. Cole and her prayer-book.

To return to Lucian Gay. It was a rule with Rigby that no one, if possible, should do anything for Lord Monmouth but himself; and as a jester must be found, he was determined that his lordship should have the best in the market, and that he should have the credit of furnishing the article. As a reward, therefore, for many past services, and a fresh claim to his future exertions, Rigby one day broke to Gay that the hour had at length arrived when the highest object of reasonable ambition on his part, and the fulfilment of one of Rigby's long-cherished and dearest hopes, were alike to be realised. Gay was to be presented to Lord Monmouth and dine at Monmouth House.

The acquaintance was a successful one; very agreeable to both parties. Gay became an habitual guest of Lord Monmouth when his patron was in England; and in his absence received frequent and substantial marks of his kind recollection, for Lord Monmouth was generous to those who amused him.

In the meantime the hour of dinner is at hand. Coningsby, who had lost the key of his carpet-bag, which he finally cut open with a penknife that he found on his writing-table, and the blade of which he broke in the operation, only reached the drawing-room as the figure of his grandfather, leaning on his

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ivory cane, and following his guests, was just visible in the distance. He was soon overtaken. Perceiving Coningsby, Lord Monmouth made him a bow, not so formal a one as in the morning, but still a bow, and said, 'I hope you liked your drive.'

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CHAPTER VI.

A Little Dinner.

A LITTLE dinner, not more than the Muses, with all the guests clever, and some pretty, offers human life and human nature under very favourable circumstances. In the present instance, too, every one was anxious to please, for the host was entirely well-bred, never selfish in little things, and always contributed his quota to the general fund of polished sociability.

Although there was really only one thought in every male mind present, still, regard for the ladies, and some little apprehension of the servants, banished politics from discourse during the greater part of the dinner, with the occasional exception of some rapid and flying allusion which the initiated understood, but which remained a mystery to the rest. Nevertheless an old story now and then well told by Mr. Ormsby, a new joke now and then well introduced by Mr. Gay, some dashing assertion by Mr. Rigby, which, though wrong, was startling; this agreeable blending of anecdote, jest, and paradox, kept everything fluent, and produced that degree of mild excitation which is desirable. Lord Monmouth sometimes summed up with an epigrammatic sentence, and

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turned the conversation by a question, in case it dwelt too much on the same topic. Lord Eskdale addressed himself principally to the ladies; inquired after their morning drive and doings, spoke of new fashions, and quoted a letter from Paris. Madame Colonna was not witty, but she had that sweet Roman frankness which is so charming. The presence of a beautiful woman, natural and good-tempered, even if she be not a L'Espinasse or a De Staël, is animating.

Nevertheless, owing probably to the absorbing powers of the forbidden subject, there were moments when it seemed that a pause was impending, and Mr. Ormsby, an old hand, seized one of these critical instants to address a good-natured question to Coningsby, whose acquaintance he had already cultivated by taking wine with him.

'And how do you like Eton?' asked Mr. Ormsby.

It was the identical question which had been presented to Coningsby in the memorable interview of the morning, and which had received no reply, or rather had produced on his part a sentimental ebullition that had absolutely destined or doomed him to the Church.

'I should like to see the fellow who did *not* like Eton,' said Coningsby, briskly, determined this time to be very brave.

''Gad! I must go down and see the old place,' said Mr. Ormsby, touched by a pensive reminiscence. 'One can get a good bed and a bottle of port at the Christopher, still?'

'You had better come and try, sir,' said Coningsby. 'If you will come some day and dine with me at the Christopher, I will give you such a bottle of champagne as you never tasted yet.'

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The Marquess looked at him, but said nothing.

'Ah! I liked a dinner at the Christopher,' said Mr. Ormsby; 'after mutton, mutton, mutton, every day, it was not a bad thing.'

'We had venison for dinner every week last season,' said Coningsby; 'Buckhurst had it sent up from his park. But I don't care for dinner. Breakfast is my lounge.'

'Ah! those little rolls and pats of butter,' said Mr. Ormsby. 'Short commons, though. What do you think we did in my time? We used to send over the way to get a mutton-chop.'

'I wish you could see Buckhurst and me at breakfast,' said Coningsby, 'with a pound of Castle's sausages!'

'What Buckhurst is that, Harry?' inquired Lord Monmouth, in a tone of some interest, and for the first time calling him by his Christian name.

'Sir Charles Buckhurst, sir, a Berkshire man: Shirley Park is his place.'

'Why, that must be Charley's son, Eskdale,' said Lord Monmouth; 'I had no idea he could be so young.'

'He married late, you know, and had nothing but daughters for a long time.'

'Well, I hope there will be no Reform Bill for Eton,' said Lord Monmouth, musingly.

The servants had now retired.

'I think, Lord Monmouth,' said Mr. Rigby, 'we must ask permission to drink one toast to-day.'

'Nay, I will myself give it,' he replied. 'Madame Colonna, you will, I am sure, join us when we drink, THE DUKE!'

'Ah! what a man!' exclaimed the Princess. 'What

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a pity it is you have a House of Commons here! England would be the greatest country in the world if it were not for that House of Commons. It makes so much confusion!'

'Don't abuse our property,' said Lord Eskdale; 'Lord Monmouth and I have still twenty votes of that same body between us.'

'And there is a combination,' said Rigby, 'by which you may still keep them.'

'Ah! now for Rigby's combination,' said Lord Eskdale.

'The only thing that can save this country,' said Rigby, 'is a coalition on a sliding scale.'

'You had better buy up the Birmingham Union and the other bodies,' said Lord Monmouth; 'I believe it might all be done for two or three hundred thousand pounds; and the newspapers too. Pitt would have settled this business long ago.'

'Well, at any rate, we are in,' said Rigby, 'and we must do something.'

'I should like to see Grey's list of new peers,' said Lord Eskdale. 'They say there are several members of our club in it.'

'And the claims to the honour are so opposite,' said Lucian Gay; 'one, on account of his large estate; another, because he has none; one, because he has a well-grown family to perpetuate the title; another, because he has no heir, and no power of ever obtaining one.'

'I wonder how he will form his cabinet,' said Lord Monmouth; 'the old story won't do.'

'I hear that Baring is to be one of the new cards; they say it will please in the city,' said Lord Eskdale. 'I suppose they will pick out of hedge and

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ditch everything that has ever had the semblance of liberalism.'

'Affairs in my time were never so complicated,' said Mr. Ormsby.

'Nay, it appears to me to lie in a nutshell,' said Lucian Gay; 'one party wishes to keep their old boroughs, and the other to get their new peers.'

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CHAPTER VII.

Coningsby Finds Favour.

THE future historian of the country will be perplexed to ascertain what was the distinct object which the Duke of Wellington proposed to himself in the political manœuvres of May, 1832. It was known that the passing of the Reform Bill was a condition absolute with the King; it was unquestionable that the first general election under the new law must ignominiously expel the Anti-Reform Ministry from power, who would then resume their seats on the Opposition benches in both Houses with the loss not only of their boroughs, but of that reputation for political consistency which might have been some compensation for the parliamentary influence of which they had been deprived. It is difficult to recognise in this premature effort of the Anti-Reform leader to thrust himself again into the conduct of public affairs, any indications of the prescient judgment which might have been expected from such a quarter. It savoured rather of restlessness than of energy; and, while it proved in its progress not only an ignorance on his part of the public mind, but of the feelings of his

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own party, it terminated under circumstances which were humiliating to the Crown, and painfully significant of the future position of the House of Lords in the new constitutional scheme.

The Duke of Wellington has ever been the votary of circumstances. He cares little for causes. He watches events rather than seeks to produce them. It is a characteristic of the military mind. Rapid combinations, the result of a quick, vigilant, and comprehensive glance, are generally triumphant in the field: but in civil affairs, where results are not immediate; in diplomacy and in the management of deliberative assemblies, where there is much intervening time and many counteracting causes, this velocity of decision, this fitful and precipitate action, are often productive of considerable embarrassment, and sometimes of terrible discomfiture. It is remarkable that men celebrated for military prudence are often found to be headstrong statesmen. In civil life a great general is frequently and strangely the creature of impulse; influenced in his political movements by the last snatch of information; and often the creature of the last aide-de-camp who has his ear.

We shall endeavour to trace in another chapter the reasons which on this as on previous and subsequent occasions, induced Sir Robert Peel to stand aloof, if possible, from official life, and made him reluctant to re-enter the service of his Sovereign. In the present instance, even temporary success could only have been secured by the utmost decision, promptness, and energy. These were all wanting: some were afraid to follow the bold example of their leader; many were disinclined. In eight-and-forty hours it was known there was a 'hitch.'

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The Reform party, who had been rather stupefied than appalled by the accepted mission of the Duke of Wellington, collected their scattered senses, and rallied their forces. The agitators harangued, the mobs hooted. The City of London, as if the King had again tried to seize the five members, appointed a permanent committee of the Common Council to watch the fortunes of the 'great national measure,' and to report daily. Brooks's, which was the only place that at first was really frightened and talked of compromise, grew valiant again; while young Whig heroes jumped upon club-room tables, and delivered fiery invectives. Emboldened by these demonstrations, the House of Commons met in great force, and passed a vote which struck, without disguise, at all rival powers in the State; virtually announced its supremacy; revealed the forlorn position of the House of Lords under the new arrangement; and seemed to lay for ever the fluttering phantom of regal prerogative.

It was on the 9th of May that Lord Lyndhurst was with the King, and on the 15th all was over. Nothing in parliamentary history so humiliating as the funeral oration delivered that day by the Duke of Wellington over the old constitution, that, modelled on the Venetian, had governed England since the accession of the House of Hanover. He described his Sovereign, when his Grace first repaired to his Majesty, as in a state of the greatest 'difficulty and distress,' appealing to his never-failing loyalty to extricate him from his trouble and vexation. The Duke of Wellington, representing the House of Lords, sympathises with the King, and pledges his utmost efforts for his Majesty's relief. But after five days' exertion,

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this man of indomitable will and invincible fortunes resigns the task in discomfiture and despair, and alleges as the only and sufficient reason of his utter and hopeless defeat, that the House of Commons had come to a vote which ran counter to the contemplated exercise of the prerogative.

From that moment power passed from the House of Lords to another assembly. But if the peers have ceased to be magnificoes, may it not also happen that the Sovereign may cease to be a Doge? It is not impossible that the political movements of our time, which seem on the surface to have a tendency to democracy, may have in reality a monarchical bias.

In less than a fortnight's time — the House of Lords, like James II., having abdicated their functions by absence — the Reform Bill passed; the ardent monarch, who a few months before had expressed his readiness to go down to Parliament, in a hackney-coach if necessary, to assist its progress, now declining personally to give his assent to its provisions.

In the protracted discussions to which this celebrated measure gave rise, nothing is more remarkable than the perplexities into which the speakers of both sides are thrown, when they touch upon the nature of the representative principle. On one hand it was maintained that, under the old system, the people were virtually represented; while, on the other, it was triumphantly urged that if the principle be conceded, the people should not be virtually, but actually, represented. But who are the people? And where are you to draw a line? And why should there be any? It was urged that a contribution to the taxes was the constitutional qualification for the suffrage. But we have established a system of taxa-

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tion in this country of so remarkable a nature that the beggar who chews his quid as he sweeps a crossing is contributing to the imposts! Is he to have a vote? He is one of the people, and he yields his quota to the public burthens.

Amid these conflicting statements, and these confounding conclusions, it is singular that no member of either House should have recurred to the original character of these popular assemblies, which have always prevailed among the northern nations. We still retain in the antique phraseology of our statutes the term which might have beneficially guided a modern Reformer in his reconstructive labours.

When the crowned Northman consulted on the welfare of his kingdom, he assembled the ESTATES of his realm. Now, an estate is a class of the nation invested with political rights. There appeared the estate of the clergy, of the barons, of other classes. In the Scandinavian kingdoms to this day, the estate of the peasants sends its representatives to the Diet. In England, under the Normans, the Church and the Baronage were convoked, together with the estate of the Community, a term which then probably described the inferior holders of land, whose tenure was not immediate of the Crown. This Third Estate was so numerous that convenience suggested its appearance by representation; while the others, more limited, appeared, and still appear, personally. The Third Estate was reconstructed as circumstances developed themselves. It was a Reform of Parliament when the towns were summoned.

In treating the House of the Third Estate as the House of the People, and not as the House of a privi-

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leged class, the Ministry and Parliament of 1831 virtually conceded the principle of Universal Suffrage. In this point of view the ten-pound franchise was an arbitrary, irrational, and impolitic qualification. It had, indeed, the merit of simplicity, and so had the constitutions of Abbé Siéyès. But its immediate and inevitable result was Chartism.

But if the Ministry and Parliament of 1831 had announced that the time had arrived when the Third Estate should be enlarged and reconstructed, they would have occupied an intelligible position; and if, instead of simplicity of elements in its reconstruction, they had sought, on the contrary, various and varying materials which would have neutralised the painful predominance of any particular interest in the new scheme, and prevented those banded jealousies which have been its consequences, the nation would have found itself in a secure condition. Another class not less numerous than the existing one, and invested with privileges not less important, would have been added to the public estates of the realm; and the bewildering phrase 'the People' would have remained, what it really is, a term of natural philosophy and not of political science.

During this eventful week of May, 1832, when an important revolution was effected in the most considerable of modern kingdoms, in a manner so tranquil that the victims themselves were scarcely conscious at the time of the catastrophe, Coningsby passed his hours in unaccustomed pleasures, and in novel excitement. Although he heard daily from the lips of Mr. Rigby and his friends that England was for ever lost, the assembled guests still contrived to do justice to

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his grandfather's excellent dinners; nor did the impending ruin that awaited them prevent the Princess Colonna from going to the Opera, whither she very good-naturedly took Coningsby. Madame Colonna, indeed, gave such gratifying accounts of her dear young friend, that Coningsby became daily a greater favourite with Lord Monmouth, who cherished the idea that his grandson had inherited not merely the colour of his eyes, but something of his shrewd and fearless spirit.

With Lucretia, Coningsby did not much advance. She remained silent and sullen. She was not beautiful; pallid, with a lowering brow, and an eye that avoided meeting another's. Madame Colonna, though good-natured, felt for her something of the affection for which step-mothers are celebrated. Lucretia, indeed, did not encourage her kindness, which irritated her step-mother, who seemed seldom to address her but to rate and chide; Lucretia never replied, but looked dogged. Her father, the Prince, did not compensate for this treatment. The memory of her mother, whom he had greatly disliked, did not soften his heart. He was a man still young; slender, not tall; very handsome, but worn; a haggard Antinous; his beautiful hair daily thinning; his dress rich and effeminate; many jewels, much lace. He seldom spoke, but was polished though moody.

At the end of the week, Coningsby returned to Eton. On the eve of his departure, Lord Monmouth desired his grandson to meet him in his apartments on the morrow, before quitting his roof. This farewell visit was as kind and gracious as the first one had been repulsive. Lord Monmouth gave Coningsby

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his blessing and ten pounds; desired that he would order a dress, anything he liked, for the approaching Montem, which Lord Monmouth meant to attend; and informed his grandson that he should order that in future a proper supply of game and venison should be forwarded to Eton for the use of himself and his friends.

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CHAPTER VIII.

Back at Eton.

AFTER eight o'clock school, the day following the return of Coningsby, according to custom, he repaired to Buckhurst's room, where Henry Sydney, Lord Vere, and our hero held with him their breakfast mess. They were all in the fifth form, and habitual companions, on the river or on the Fives' Wall, at cricket or at foot-ball. The return of Coningsby, their leader alike in sport and study, inspired them to-day with unusual spirits, which, to say the truth, were never particularly depressed. Where he had been, what he had seen, what he had done, what sort of fellow his grandfather was, whether the visit had been a success; here were materials for almost endless inquiry. And, indeed, to do them justice, the last question was not the least exciting to them; for the deep and cordial interest which all felt in Coningsby's welfare far outweighed the curiosity which, under ordinary circumstances, they would have experienced on the return of one of their companions from an unusual visit to London. The report of their friend imparted to them unbounded satisfac-

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tion, when they learned that his relative was a splendid fellow; that he had been loaded with kindness and favours; that Monmouth House, the wonders of which he rapidly sketched, was hereafter to be his home; that Lord Monmouth was coming down to Montem; that Coningsby was to order any dress he liked, build a new boat if he chose; and, finally, had been pouched in a manner worthy of a Marquess and a grandfather.

'By-the-bye,' said Buckhurst, when the hubbub had a little subsided, 'I am afraid you will not half like it, Coningsby; but, old fellow, I had no idea you would be back this morning; I have asked Millbank to breakfast here.'

A cloud stole over the clear brow of Coningsby.

'It was my fault,' said the amiable Henry Sydney; 'but I really wanted to be civil to Millbank, and as you were not here, I put Buckhurst up to ask him.'

'Well,' said Coningsby, as if sullenly resigned, 'never mind; but why should you ask an infernal manufacturer?'

'Why, the Duke always wished me to pay him some attention,' said Lord Henry, mildly. 'His family were so civil to us when we were at Manchester.'

'Manchester, indeed!' said Coningsby; 'if you knew what I do about Manchester! A pretty state we have been in in London this week past with your Manchesters and Birminghams!'

'Come, come, Coningsby,' said Lord Vere, the son of a Whig minister; 'I am all for Manchester and Birmingham.'

'It is all up with the country, I can tell you,' said Coningsby, with the air of one who was in the secret.

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'My father says it will all go right now,' rejoined Lord Vere. 'I had a letter from my sister yesterday.'

'They say we shall all lose our estates, though,' said Buckhurst; 'I know I shall not give up mine without a fight. Shirley was besieged, you know, in the civil wars; and the rebels got infernally licked.'

'I think that all the people about Beaumanoir would stand by the Duke,' said Lord Henry, pensively.

'Well, you may depend upon it you will have it very soon,' said Coningsby. 'I know it from the best authority.'

'It depends on whether my father remains in,' said Lord Vere. 'He is the only man who can govern the country now. All say that.'

At this moment Millbank entered. He was a good-looking boy, somewhat shy, and yet with a sincere expression in his countenance. He was evidently not extremely intimate with those who were now his companions. Buckhurst, and Henry Sydney, and Vere, welcomed him cordially. He looked at Coningsby with some constraint, and then said:

'You have been in London, Coningsby?'

'Yes, I have been there during all the row.'

'You must have had a rare lark.'

'Yes, if having your windows broken by a mob be a rare lark. They could not break my grandfather's, though. Monmouth House is in a court-yard. All noblemen's houses should be in court-yards.'

'I was glad to see it all ended very well,' said Millbank.

'It has not begun yet,' said Coningsby.

'What?' said Millbank.

'Why, the revolution.'

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'The Reform Bill will prevent a revolution, my father says,' said Millbank.

'By Jove! here's the goose,' said Buckhurst.

At this moment there entered the room a little boy, the scion of a noble house, bearing a roasted goose, which he had carried from the kitchen of the opposite inn, the Christopher. The lower boy or fag, depositing his burthen, asked his master whether he had further need of him; and Buckhurst, after looking round the table, and ascertaining that he had not, gave him permission to retire; but he had scarcely disappeared, when his master singing out, 'Lower boy, St. John!' he immediately re-entered, and demanded his master's pleasure, which was that he should pour some water in the teapot. This being accomplished, St. John really made his escape, and retired to a pupil-room, where the bullying of a tutor, because he had no derivations, exceeded in all probability the bullying of his master, had he contrived in his passage from the Christopher to have upset the goose or dropped the sausages.

In their merry meal, the Reform Bill was forgotten. Their thoughts were soon concentred in their little world, though it must be owned that visions of palaces and beautiful ladies did occasionally flit over the brain of one of the company. But for him especially there was much of interest and novelty. So much had happened in his absence! There was a week's arrears for him of Eton annals. They were recounted in so fresh a spirit, and in such vivid colours, that Coningsby lost nothing by his London visit. All the bold feats that had been done, and all the bright things that had been said; all the triumphs, and all the failures, and all the scrapes; how popular

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one master had made himself, and how ridiculous another — all was detailed with a liveliness, a candour, and a picturesque ingenuousness, which would have made the fortune of a Herodotus or a Froissart.

'I'll tell you what,' said Buckhurst, 'I move that after twelve we five go up to Maidenhead.'

'Agreed; agreed!'

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CHAPTER IX.

A Rescue.

ILLBANK was the son of one of the wealthiest manufacturers in Lancashire. His father, whose opinions were of a very democratic bent, sent his son to Eton, though he disapproved of the system of education pursued there, to show that he had as much right to do so as any duke in the land. He had, however, brought up his only boy with a due prejudice against every sentiment or institution of an aristocratic character, and had especially impressed upon him in his school career, to avoid the slightest semblance of courting the affections or society of any member of the falsely-held superior class.

The character of the son, as much as the influence of the father, tended to the fulfilment of these injunctions. Oswald Millbank was of a proud and independent nature; reserved, a little stern. The early and constantly-reiterated dogma of his father, that he belonged to a class debarred from its just position in the social system, had aggravated the grave and somewhat dicontented humour of his blood. His talents were considerable, though invested with no dazzling

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quality. He had not that quick and brilliant apprehension, which, combined with a memory of rare retentiveness, had already advanced Coningsby far beyond his age, and made him already looked to as the future hero of the school. But Millbank possessed one of those strong, industrious volitions whose perseverance amounts almost to genius, and nearly attains its results. Though Coningsby was by a year his junior, they were rivals. This circumstance had no tendency to remove the prejudice which Coningsby entertained against him, but its bias on the part of Millbank had a contrary effect.

The influence of the individual is nowhere so sensible as at school. There the personal qualities strike without any intervening and counteracting causes. A gracious presence, noble sentiments, or a happy talent, make their way there at once, without preliminary inquiries as to what set they are in, or what family they are of, how much they have a-year, or where they live. Now, on no spirit had the influence of Coningsby, already the favourite, and soon probably to become the idol, of the school, fallen more effectually than on that of Millbank, though it was an influence that no one could suspect except its votary or its victim.

At school, friendship is a passion. It entrances the being; it tears the soul. All loves of after-life can never bring its rapture, or its wretchedness; no bliss so absorbing, no pangs of jealousy or despair so crushing and so keen! What tenderness and what devotion; what illimitable confidence, infinite revelations of inmost thoughts; what ecstatic present and romantic future; what bitter estrangements and what melting reconciliations; what scenes of wild recrimi-

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nation, agitating explanations, passionate correspondence; what insane sensitiveness, and what frantic sensibility; what earthquakes of the heart and whirlwinds of the soul are confined in that simple phrase, a schoolboy's friendship! 'Tis some indefinite recollection of these mystic passages of their young emotion that makes grey-haired men mourn over the memory of their schoolboy days. It is a spell that can soften the acerbity of political warfare, and with its witchery can call forth a sigh even amid the callous bustle of fashionable saloons.

The secret of Millbank's life was a passionate admiration and affection for Coningsby. Pride, his natural reserve, and his father's injunctions, had, however, hitherto successfully combined to restrain the slightest demonstration of these sentiments. Indeed, Coningsby and himself were never companions, except in school, or in some public game. The demeanour of Coningsby gave no encouragement to intimacy to one, who, under any circumstances, would have required considerable invitation to open himself. So Millbank fed in silence on a cherished idea. It was his happiness to be in the same form, to join in the same sport, with Coningsby; occasionally to be thrown in unusual contact with him, to exchange slight and not unkind words. In their division they were rivals; Millbank sometimes triumphed, but to be vanquished by Coningsby was for him not without a degree of wild satisfaction. Not a gesture, not a phrase from Coningsby, that he did not watch and ponder over and treasure up. Coningsby was his model, alike in studies, in manners, or in pastimes; the aptest scholar, the gayest wit, the most graceful associate, the most accomplished playmate: his stand-

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ard of the excellent. Yet Millbank was the very last boy in the school who would have had credit given him by his companions for profound and ardent feeling. He was not indeed unpopular. The favourite of the school like Coningsby, he could, under no circumstances, ever have become; nor was he qualified to obtain that general graciousness among the multitude, which the sweet disposition of Henry Sydney, or the gay profusion of Buckhurst, acquired without an effort. Millbank was not blessed with the charm of manner. He seemed close and cold; but he was courageous, just, and inflexible; never bullied, and to his utmost would prevent tyranny. The little boys looked up to him as a stern protector; and his word, too, throughout the school was a proverb: and truth ranks a great quality among boys. In a word, Millbank was respected by those among whom he lived; and schoolboys scan character more nicely than men suppose.

A brother of Henry Sydney, quartered in Lancashire, had been wounded recently in a riot, and had received great kindness from the Millbank family, in whose immediate neighbourhood the disturbance had occurred. The kind Duke had impressed on Henry Sydney to acknowledge with cordiality to the younger Millbank at Eton, the sense which his family entertained of these benefits; but though Henry lost neither time nor opportunity in obeying an injunction, which was grateful to his own heart, he failed in cherishing, or indeed creating, any intimacy with the object of his solicitude. A companionship with one who was Coningsby's relative and most familiar friend, would at the first glance have appeared, independently of all other considerations, a most desirable result for Millbank to accomplish. But perhaps this very circum-

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stance afforded additional reasons for the absence of all encouragement with which he received the overtures of Lord Henry. Millbank suspected that Coningsby was not affected in his favour, and his pride recoiled from gaining, by any indirect means, an intimacy which to have obtained in a plain and express manner would have deeply gratified him. However, the urgent invitation of Buckhurst and Henry Sydney, and the fear that a persistence in refusal might be misinterpreted into churlishness, had at length brought Millbank to their breakfast-mess, though, when he accepted their invitation, he did not apprehend that Coningsby would have been present.

It was about an hour before sunset, the day of this very breakfast, and a good number of boys, in lounging groups, were collected in the Long Walk. The sports and matches of the day were over. Criticism had succeeded to action in sculling and in cricket. They talked over the exploits of the morning; canvassed the merits of the competitors, marked the fellow whose play or whose stroke was improving; glanced at another, whose promise had not been fulfilled; discussed the pretensions, and adjudged the palm. Thus public opinion is formed. Some, too, might be seen with their books and exercises, intent on the inevitable and impending tasks. Among these, some unhappy wight in the remove, wandering about with his hat, after parochial fashion, seeking relief in the shape of a verse. A hard lot this, to know that you must be delivered of fourteen verses at least in the twenty-four hours, and to be conscious that you are pregnant of none. The lesser boys, urchins of tender years, clustered like flies round the baskets of certain vendors of sugary delicacies that

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rested on the Long Walk wall. The pallid countenance, the lack-lustre eye, the hoarse voice clogged with accumulated phlegm, indicated too surely the irreclaimable and hopeless votary of lollypop, the opium-eater of schoolboys.

'It is settled, the match to-morrow shall be between Aquatics and Drybobs,' said a senior boy; who was arranging a future match at cricket.

'But what is to be done about Fielding major?' inquired another. 'He has not paid his boating money, and I say he has no right to play among the Aquatics before he has paid his money.'

'Oh! but we must have Fielding major, he is such a devil of a swipe.'

'I declare he shall not play among the Aquatics if he does not pay his boating money. It is an infernal shame.'

'Let us ask Buckhurst. Where is Buckhurst?'

'Have you got any toffy?' inquired a dull-looking little boy, in a hoarse voice, of one of the vendors of scholastic confectionery.

'Tom Trot, sir.'

'No; I want toffy.'

'Very nice Tom Trot, sir.'

'No, I want toffy; I have been eating Tom Trot all day.'

'Where is Buckhurst? We must settle about the Aquatics.'

'Well, I for one will not play if Fielding major plays amongst the Aquatics. That is settled.'

'Oh! nonsense; he will pay his money if you ask him.'

'I shall not ask him again. The captain duns us every day. It is an infernal shame.'

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'I say, Burnham, where can one get some toffy? This fellow never has any.'

'I will tell you; at Barnes's on the bridge. The best toffy in the world.'

'I will go at once. I must have some toffy.'

'Just help me with this verse, Collins,' said one boy to another, in an imploring tone, 'that's a good fellow.'

'Well, give it us: first syllable in *fabri* is short; three false quantities in the first two lines! You're a pretty one. There, I have done it for you.'

'That's a good fellow.'

'Any fellow seen Buckhurst?'

'Gone up the river with Coningsby and Henry Sydney.'

'But he must be back by this time. I want him to make the list for the match to-morrow. Where the deuce can Buckhurst be?'

And now, as rumours rise in society we know not how, so there was suddenly a flying report in this multitude, the origin of which no one in his alarm stopped to ascertain, that a boy was drowned.

Every heart was agitated.

What boy? When, where, how? Who was absent? Who had been on the river to-day? Buckhurst. The report ran that Buckhurst was drowned. Great were the trouble and consternation. Buckhurst was ever much liked; and now no one remembered anything but his good qualities.

'Who heard it was Buckhurst?' said Sedgwick, captain of the school, coming forward.

'I heard Bradford tell Palmer it was Buckhurst,' said a little boy.

'Where is Bradford?'

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'Here.'

'What do you know about Buckhurst?'

'Wentworth told me that he was afraid Buckhurst was drowned. He heard it at the Brocas; a bargeman told him about a quarter of an hour ago.'

'Here is Wentworth! Here is Wentworth!' a hundred voices exclaimed, and they formed a circle round him.

'Well, what did you hear, Wentworth?' asked Sedgwick.

'I was at the Brocas, and a Bargee told me that an Eton fellow had been drowned above Surley, and the only Eton boat above Surley to-day, as I can learn, is Buckhurst's four-oar. That is all.'

There was a murmur of hope.

'Oh! come, come,' said Sedgwick, 'there is some chance. Who is with Buckhurst; who knows?'

'I saw him walk down to the Brocas with Vere,' said a boy.

'I hope it is not Vere,' said a little boy, with a tearful eye; 'he never lets any fellow bully me.'

'Here is Maltravers,' halloed out a boy; 'he knows something.'

'Well, what do you know, Maltravers?'

'I heard Boots at the Christopher say that an Eton fellow was drowned, and that he had seen a person who was there.'

'Bring Boots here,' said Sedgwick.

Instantly a band of boys rushed over the way, and in a moment the witness was produced.

'What have you heard, Sam, about this accident?' said Sedgwick.

'Well, sir, I heard a young gentleman was drowned above Monkey Island,' said Boots.

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'And no name mentioned?'

'Well, sir, I believe it was Mr. Coningsby.'

A general groan of horror.

'Coningsby, Coningsby! By Heavens I hope not,' said Sedgwick.

'I very much fear so,' said Boots; 'as how the bargeman who told me saw Mr. Coningsby in the Lock House laid out in flannels.'

'I had sooner any fellow had been drowned than Coningsby,' whispered one boy to another.

'I liked him, the best fellow at Eton,' responded his companion, in a smothered tone.

'What a clever fellow he was!'

'And so deuced generous!'

'He would have got the medal if he had lived.'

'And how came he to be drowned? for he was such a fine swimmer!'

'I heerd Mr. Coningsby was saving another's life,' continued Boots in his evidence, 'which makes it in a manner more sorrowful.'

'Poor Coningsby!' exclaimed a boy, bursting into tears: 'I move the whole school goes into mourning.'

'I wish we could get hold of this bargeman,' said Sedgwick. 'Now stop, stop, don't all run away in that mad manner; you frighten the people. Charles Herbert and Palmer, you two go down to the Brocas and inquire.'

But just at this moment, an increased stir and excitement were evident in the Long Walk; the circle round Sedgwick opened, and there appeared Henry Sydney and Buckhurst.

There was a dead silence. It was impossible that suspense could be strained to a higher pitch. The

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air and countenance of Sydney and Buckhurst were rather excited than mournful or alarmed. They needed no inquiries, for before they had penetrated the circle they had become aware of its cause.

Buckhurst, the most energetic of beings, was of course the first to speak. Henry Sydney indeed looked pale and nervous; but his companion, flushed and resolute, knew exactly how to hit a popular assembly, and at once came to the point.

'It is all a false report, an infernal lie; Coningsby is quite safe, and nobody is drowned.'

There was a cheer that might have been heard at Windsor Castle. Then, turning to Sedgwick, in an undertone Buckhurst added,

'It *is* all right, but, by Jove! we have had a shaver. I will tell you all in a moment, but we want to keep the thing quiet and so let the fellows disperse, and we will talk afterwards.'

In a few moments the Long Walk had resumed its usual character; but Sedgwick, Herbert, and one or two others turned into the playing fields, where, undisturbed and unnoticed by the multitude, they listened to the promised communication of Buckhurst and Henry Sydney.

'You know we went up the river together,' said Buckhurst. 'Myself, Henry Sydney, Coningsby, Vere, and Millbank. We had breakfasted together, and after twelve agreed to go up to Maidenhead. Well, we went up much higher than we had intended. About a quarter of a mile before we had got to the Lock we pulled up; Coningsby was then steering. Well, we fastened the boat to, and were all of us stretched out on the meadow, when Millbank and Vere said they should go and bathe in the Lock Pool. The rest of

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us were opposed; but after Millbank and Vere had gone about ten minutes, Coningsby, who was very fresh, said he had changed his mind and should go and bathe too. So he left us. He had scarcely got to the pool when he heard a cry. There was a fellow drowning. He threw off his clothes and was in in a moment. The fact is this: Millbank had plunged in the pool and found himself in some eddies, caused by the meeting of two currents. He called out to Vere not to come, and tried to swim off. But he was beat, and seeing he was in danger, Vere jumped in. But the stream was so strong, from the great fall of water from the lasher above, that Vere was exhausted before he could reach Millbank, and nearly sank himself. Well, he just saved himself; but Millbank sank as Coningsby jumped in. What do you think of that?'

'By Jove!' exclaimed Sedgwick, Herbert, and all. The favourite oath of schoolboys perpetuates the divinity of Olympus.

'And now comes the worst. Coningsby caught Millbank when he rose, but he found himself in the midst of the same strong current that had before nearly swamped Vere. What a lucky thing that he had taken into his head not to pull to-day! Fresher than Vere, he just managed to land Millbank and himself. The shouts of Vere called us, and we arrived to find the bodies of Millbank and Coningsby apparently lifeless, for Millbank was quite gone, and Coningsby had swooned on landing.'

'If Coningsby had been lost,' said Henry Sydney, 'I never would have shown my face at Eton again.'

'Can you conceive a position more terrible?' said Buckhurst. 'I declare I shall never forget it as long

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as I live. However, there was the Lock House at hand; and we got blankets and brandy. Coningsby was soon all right; but Millbank, I can tell you, gave us some trouble. I thought it was all up. Didn't you, Henry Sydney?'

'The most fishy thing I ever saw,' said Henry Sydney.

'Well, we were fairly frightened here,' said Sedgwick. 'The first report was, that you had gone, but that seemed without foundation; but Coningsby was quite given up. Where are they now?'

'They are both at their tutors'. I thought they had better keep quiet. Vere is with Millbank, and we are going back to Coningsby directly; but we thought it best to show, finding on our arrival that there were all sorts of rumours about. I think it will be best to report at once to my tutor, for he will be sure to hear something.'

'I would if I were you.'

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CHAPTER X.

Oswald Millbank.

WHAT wonderful things are events! The least are of greater importance than the most sublime and comprehensive speculations! In what fanciful schemes to obtain the friendship of Coningsby had Millbank in his reveries often indulged! What combinations that were to extend over years and influence their lives! But the moment that he entered the world of action, his pride recoiled from the plans and hopes which his sympathy had inspired. His sensibility and his inordinate self-respect were always at variance. And he seldom exchanged a word with the being whose idea engrossed his affection.

And now, suddenly, an event had occurred, like all events, unforeseen, which in a few, brief, agitating, tumultuous moments had singularly and utterly changed the relations that previously subsisted between him and the former object of his concealed tenderness. Millbank now stood with respect to Coningsby in the position of one who owes to another the greatest conceivable obligation; a favour which time could permit him neither to forget nor to repay. Pride was

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a sentiment that could no longer subsist before the preserver of his life. Devotion to that being, open, almost ostentatious, was now a duty, a paramount and absorbing tie. The sense of past peril, the rapture of escape, a renewed relish for the life so nearly forfeited, a deep sentiment of devout gratitude to the providence that had guarded over him, for Millbank was an eminently religious boy, a thought of home, and the anguish that might have overwhelmed his hearth; all these were powerful and exciting emotions for a young and fervent mind, in addition to the peculiar source of sensibility on which we have already touched. Lord Vere, who lodged in the same house as Millbank, and was sitting by his bedside, observed, as night fell, that his mind wandered.

The illness of Millbank, the character of which soon transpired, and was soon exaggerated, attracted the public attention with increased interest to the circumstances out of which it had arisen, and from which the parties principally concerned had wished to have diverted notice. The sufferer, indeed, had transgressed the rules of the school by bathing at an unlicensed spot, where there were no expert swimmers in attendance, as is customary, to instruct the practice and to guard over the lives of the young adventurers. But the circumstances with which this violation of rules had been accompanied, and the assurance of several of the party that they had not themselves infringed the regulations, combined with the high character of Millbank, made the authorities not over anxious to visit with penalties a breach of observance which, in the case of the only proved offender, had been attended with such impressive consequences. The feat of Coningsby was extolled

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by all as an act of high gallantry and skill. It confirmed and increased the great reputation which he already enjoyed.

'Millbank is getting quite well,' said Buckhurst to Coningsby a few days after the accident. 'Henry Sydney and I are going to see him. Will you come?'

'I think we shall be too many. I will go another day,' replied Coningsby.

So they went without him. They found Millbank up and reading.

'Well, old fellow,' said Buckhurst, 'how are you? We should have come up before, but they would not let us. And you are quite right now, eh?'

'Quite. Has there been any row about it?'

'All blown over,' said Henry Sydney; 'C*******y behaved like a trump.'

'I have seen nobody yet,' said Millbank; 'they would not let me till to-day. Vere looked in this morning and left me this book, but I was asleep. I hope they will let me out in a day or two. I want to thank Coningsby; I never shall rest till I have thanked Coningsby.'

'Oh, he will come to see you,' said Henry Sydney; 'I asked him just now to come with us.'

'Yes!' said Millbank, eagerly; 'and what did he say?'

'He thought we should be too many.'

'I hope I shall see him soon,' said Millbank, 'somehow or other.'

'I will tell him to come,' said Buckhurst.

'Oh! no, no, don't tell him to come,' said Millbank. 'Don't bore him.'

'I know he is going to play a match at fives this afternoon,' said Buckhurst, 'for I am one.'

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'And who are the others?' inquired Millbank.

'Herbert and Campbell.'

'Herbert is no match for Coningsby,' said Millbank.

And then they talked over all that had happened since his absence; and Buckhurst gave him a graphic report of the excitement on the afternoon of the accident; at last they were obliged to leave him.

'Well, good-bye, old fellow; we will come and see you every day. What can we do for you? Any books, or anything?'

'If any fellow asks after me,' said Millbank, 'tell him I shall be glad to see him. It is very dull being alone. But do not tell any fellow to come if he does not ask after me.'

Notwithstanding the kind suggestions of Buckhurst and Henry Sydney, Coningsby could not easily bring himself to call on Millbank. He felt a constraint. It seemed as if he went to receive thanks. He would rather have met Millbank again in school, or in the playing fields. Without being able then to analyse his feelings, he shrank unconsciously from that ebullition of sentiment which in more artificial circles is described as a scene. Not that any dislike of Millbank prompted him to this reserve. On the contrary, since he had conferred a great obligation on Millbank, his prejudice against him had sensibly decreased. How it would have been had Millbank saved Coningsby's life, is quite another affair. Probably, as Coningsby was by nature generous, his sense of justice might have struggled successfully with his painful sense of the overwhelming obligation. But in the present case there was no element to disturb his fair self-satisfaction. He had greatly distinguished

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himself; he had conferred on his rival an essential service; and the whole world rang with his applause. He began rather to like Millbank; we will not say because Millbank was the unintentional cause of his pleasurable sensations. Really it was that the unusual circumstances had prompted him to a more impartial judgment of his rival's character. In this mood, the day after the visit of Buckhurst and Henry Sydney, Coningsby called on Millbank, but finding his medical attendant with him, Coningsby availed himself of that excuse for going away without seeing him.

The next day he left Millbank a newspaper on his way to school, time not permitting a visit. Two days after, going into his room, he found on his table a letter addressed to 'Harry Coningsby, Esq.'

'ETON, *May*—, 1832.

'DEAR CONINGSBY, I very much fear that you must think me a very ungrateful fellow, because you have not heard from me before; but I was in hopes that I might get out and say to you what I feel; but whether I speak or write, it is quite impossible for me to make you understand the feelings of my heart to you. Now, I will say at once, that I have always liked you better than any fellow in the school, and always thought you the cleverest; indeed, I always thought that there was no one like you; but I never would say this or show this, because you never seemed to care for me, and because I was afraid you would think I merely wanted to con with you, as they used to say of some other fellows, whose names I will not mention, because they always tried to do so with Henry Sydney and you. I do not want this

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at all; but I want, though we may not speak to each other more than before, that we may be friends; and that you will always know that there is nothing I will not do for you, and that I like you better than any fellow at Eton. And I do not mean that this shall be only at Eton, but afterwards, wherever we may be, that you will always remember that there is nothing I will not do for you. Not because you saved my life, though that is a great thing, but because before that I would have done anything for you; only, for the cause above mentioned, I would not show it. I do not expect that we shall be more together than before; nor can I ever suppose that you could like me as you like Henry Sydney and Buckhurst, or even as you like Vere; but still I hope you will always think of me with kindness now, and let me sign myself, if ever I do write to you,

'Your most attached, affectionate, and devoted friend,

'OSWALD MILLBANK.'

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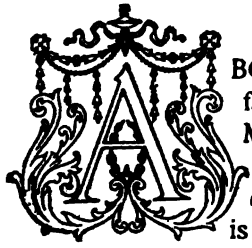
CHAPTER XI.

Eton Montem.



BOUT a fortnight after this nearly fatal adventure on the river, it was Montem. One need hardly remind the reader that this celebrated ceremony, of which the origin is lost in obscurity, and which now occurs triennially, is the tenure by which Eton College holds some of its domains. It consists in the waving of a flag by one of the scholars, on a mount near the village of Salt Hill, which, without doubt, derives its name from the circumstance that on this day every visitor to Eton, and every traveller in its vicinity, from the monarch to the peasant, are stopped on the road by youthful brigands in picturesque costume, and summoned to contribute 'salt,' in the shape of coin of the realm, to the purse collecting for the Captain of Eton, the senior scholar on the Foundation, who is about to repair to King's College, Cambridge.

On this day the Captain of Eton appears in a dress as martial as his title: indeed, each sixth-form boy represents in his uniform, though not perhaps according to the exact rules of the Horse Guards, an officer of the army. One is a marshal, another an ensign.

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There is a lieutenant, too; and the remainder are sergeants. Each of those who are intrusted with these ephemeral commissions has one or more attendants, the number of these varying according to his rank. These servitors are selected according to the wishes of the several members of the sixth form, out of the ranks of the lower boys, that is, those boys who are below the fifth form; and all these attendants are arrayed in a variety of fancy dresses. The Captain of the Oppidans and the senior Colleger next to the Captain of the school, figure also in fancy costume, and are called 'Saltbearers.' It is their business, together with the twelve senior Collegers of the fifth form, who are called 'Runners,' and whose costume is also determined by the taste of the wearers, to levy the contributions. And all the Oppidans of the fifth form, among whom ranked Coningsby, class as 'Corporals;' and are severally followed by one or more lower boys, who are denominated 'Polemen,' but who appear in their ordinary dress.

It was a fine, bright morning; the bells of Eton and Windsor rang merrily; everybody was astir, and every moment some gay equipage drove into the town. Gaily clustering in the thronged precincts of the College, might be observed many a glistening form: airy Greek or sumptuous Ottoman, heroes of the Holy Sepulchre, Spanish Hidalgos who had fought at Pavia, Highland Chiefs who had charged at Culloden, gay in the tartan of Prince Charlie. The Long Walk was full of busy groups in scarlet coats or fanciful uniforms; some in earnest conversation, some criticising the arriving guests; others encircling some magnificent hero, who astounded them with his slashed doublet or flowing plume.

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A knot of boys, sitting on the Long Walk wall, with their feet swinging in the air, watched the arriving guests of the Provost.

'I say, Townshend,' said one, 'there's Grobbleton; he *was* a bully. I wonder if that's his wife. Who's this? The Duke of Agincourt. He wasn't an Eton fellow? Yes, he was. He was called Poictiers then. Oh! ah! his name is in the upper school, very large, under Charles Fox. I say, Townshend, did you see Saville's turban? What was it made of? He says his mother brought it from Grand Cairo. Didn't he just look like the Saracen's Head? Here are some Dons. That's Hallam! We'll give him a cheer. I say, Townshend, look at this fellow. He doesn't think small beer of himself. I wonder who he is. The Duke of Wellington's valet come to say his master is engaged. Oh! by Jove, he heard you! I wonder if the Duke will come. Won't we give him a cheer!'

'By Jove! who is this?' exclaimed Townshend, and he jumped from the wall, and, followed by his companions, rushed towards the road.

Two britskas, each drawn by four grey horses of mettle, and each accompanied by outriders as well mounted, were advancing at a rapid pace along the road that leads from Slough to the College. But they were destined to an irresistible check. About fifty yards before they had reached the gate that leads into Weston's Yard, a ruthless but splendid Albanian, in crimson and gold embroidered jacket, and snowy camise, started forward, and holding out his silver-sheathed yataghan commanded the postilions to stop. A Peruvian Inca on the other side of the road gave a simultaneous command, and would infalliby have transfixed the outriders with an arrow from his un-

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erring bow, had they for an instant hesitated. The Albanian Chief then advanced to the door of the carriage, which he opened, and in a tone of great courtesy, announced that he was under the necessity of troubling its inmates for 'salt.' There was no delay. The lord of the equipage, with the amiable condescension of a 'grand monarque,' expressed his hope that the collection would be an ample one, and, as an old Etonian, placed in the hands of the Albanian his contribution, a magnificent purse, furnished for the occasion, and heavy with gold.

'Don't be alarmed, ladies,' said a very handsome young officer, laughing, and taking off his cocked hat.

'Ah!' exclaimed one of the ladies, turning at the voice, and starting a little. 'Ah! it is Mr. Coningsby.'

Lord Eskdale paid the salt for the next carriage. 'Do they come down pretty stiff?' he inquired, and then, pulling forth a roll of bank-notes from the pocket of his pea-jacket, he wished them good-morning.

The courtly Provost, then the benignant Goodall, a man who, though his experience of life was confined to the colleges in which he had passed his days, was naturally gifted with the rarest of all endowments, the talent of reception; and whose happy bearing and gracious manner, a smile ever in his eye and a lively word ever on his lip, must be recalled by all with pleasant recollections, welcomed Lord Monmouth and his friends to an assemblage of the noble, the beautiful, and the celebrated, gathered together in rooms not unworthy of them, as you looked upon their interesting walls, breathing with the portraits of the heroes whom Eton boasts, from Wotton

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to Wellesley. Music sounded in the quadrangle of the College, in which the boys were already quickly assembling. The Duke of Wellington had arrived, and the boys were cheering a hero, who was also an Eton field-marshal. From an oriel window in one of the Provost's rooms, Lord Monmouth, surrounded by every circumstance that could make life delightful, watched with some intentness the scene in the quadrangle beneath.

'I would give his fame,' said Lord Monmouth, 'if I had it, and my wealth, to be sixteen.'

Five hundred of the youth of England, sparkling with health, high spirits, and fancy dresses, were now assembled in the quadrangle. They formed into rank, and headed by a band of the Guards, thrice they marched round the court. Then quitting the College, they commenced their progress 'ad Montem.' It was a brilliant spectacle to see them defiling through the playing fields, those bowery meads; the river sparkling in the sun, the castled heights of Windsor, their glorious landscape; behind them, the pinnacles of their College.

The road from Eton to Salt Hill was clogged with carriages; the broad fields as far as eye could range were covered with human beings. Amid the burst of martial music and the shouts of the multitude, the band of heroes, as if they were marching from Athens, or Thebes, or Sparta, to some heroic deed, encircled the mount; the ensign reaches its summit, and then, amid a deafening cry of 'Floreat Etona!' he unfurls, and thrice waves the consecrated standard.

'Lord Monmouth,' said Mr. Rigby to Coningsby, 'wishes that you should beg your friends to dine with him. Of course you will ask Lord Henry and

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your friend Sir Charles Buckhurst; and is there any one else that you would like to invite?'

'Why, there is Vere,' said Coningsby, hesitating, 'and —'

'Vere! What Lord Vere?' said Mr. Rigby. 'Hum! He is one of your friends, is he? His father has done a great deal of mischief, but still he is Lord Vere. Well, of course, you can invite Vere.'

'There is another fellow I should like to ask very much,' said Coningsby, 'if Lord Monmouth would not think I was asking too many.'

'Never fear that; he sent me particularly to tell you to invite as many as you liked.'

'Well, then, I should like to ask Millbank.'

'Millbank!' said Mr. Rigby, a little excited, and then he added, 'Is that a son of Lady Albinia Millbank?'

'No; his mother is not a Lady Albinia, but he is a great friend of mine. His father is a Lancashire manufacturer.'

'By no means,' exclaimed Mr. Rigby, quite agitated. 'There is nothing in the world that Lord Monmouth dislikes so much as Manchester manufacturers, and particularly if they bear the name of Millbank. It must not be thought of, my dear Harry. I hope you have not spoken to the young man on the subject. I assure you it is quite out of the question. It would make Lord Monmouth quite ill. It would spoil everything, quite upset him.'

It was, of course, impossible for Coningsby to urge his wishes against such representations. He was disappointed, rather amazed; but Madame Colonna having sent for him to introduce her to some of the scenes and details of Eton life, his vexation was soon

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absorbed in the pride of acting in the face of his companions as the cavalier of a beautiful lady, and becoming the cicerone of the most brilliant party that had attended Montem. He presented his friends, too, to Lord Monmouth, who gave them a cordial invitation to dine with him at his hotel at Windsor, which they warmly accepted. Buckhurst delighted the Marquess by his reckless genius. Even Lucretia deigned to appear amused; especially when, on visiting the upper school, the name of CARDIFF, the title Lord Monmouth bore in his youthful days, was pointed out to her by Coningsby, cut with his grandfather's own knife on the classic panels of that memorable wall in which scarcely a name that has flourished in our history, since the commencement of the eighteenth century, may not be observed with curious admiration.

It was the humour of Lord Monmouth that the boys should be entertained with the most various and delicious banquet that luxury could devise or money could command. For some days beforehand orders had been given for the preparation of this festival. Our friends did full justice to their Lucullus; Buckhurst especially, who gave his opinion on the most refined dishes with all the intrepidity of saucy ignorance, and occasionally shook his head over a glass of Hermitage or Côte Rôtie with a dissatisfaction which a satiated Sybarite could not have exceeded. Considering all things, Coningsby and his friends exhibited a great deal of self-command; but they were gay, even to the verge of frolic. But then the occasion justified it, as much as their youth. All were in high spirits. Madame Colonna declared that she had met nothing in England equal to Montem; that it was

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a Protestant Carnival; and that its only fault was that it did not last forty days. The Prince himself was all animation, and took wine with every one of the Etonians several times. All went on flowingly until Mr. Rigby contradicted Buckhurst on some point of Eton discipline, which Buckhurst would not stand. He rallied Mr. Rigby roundly, and Coningsby, full of champagne, and owing Rigby several years of contradiction, followed up the assault. Lord Monmouth, who liked a butt, and had a weakness for boisterous gaiety, slily encouraged the boys, till Rigby began to lose his temper and get noisy.

The lads had the best of it; they said a great many funny things, and delivered themselves of several sharp retorts; whereas there was something ridiculous in Rigby putting forth his 'slashing' talents against such younkers. However, he brought the infliction on himself by his strange habit of deciding on subjects of which he knew nothing, and of always contradicting persons on the very subjects of which they were necessarily masters.

To see Rigby baited was more amusement to Lord Monmouth even than Montem. Lucian Gay, however, when the affair was getting troublesome, came forward as a diversion. He sang an extemporaneous song on the ceremony of the day, and introduced the names of all the guests at the dinner, and of a great many other persons besides. This was capital! The boys were in raptures, but when the singer threw forth a verse about Dr. Keate, the applause became uproarious.

'Good-bye, my dear Harry,' said Lord Monmouth, when he bade his grandson farewell. 'I am going abroad again; I cannot remain in this Radical-ridden

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country. Remember, though I am away, Monmouth House is your home, at least so long as it belongs to me. I understand my tailor has turned Liberal, and is going to stand for one of the metropolitan districts, a friend of Lord Durham; perhaps I shall find him in it when I return. I fear there are evil days for the NEW GENERATION!'

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CHAPTER XII.

Results of the Reform Act.

IT WAS early in November, 1834, and a large shooting party was assembled at Beaumanoir, the seat of that great nobleman who was the father of Henry Sydney. England is unrivalled for two things, sporting and politics. They were combined at Beaumanoir; for the guests came not merely to slaughter the Duke's pheasants, but to hold council on the prospects of the party, which, it was supposed by the initiated, began at this time to indicate some symptoms of brightening.

The success of the Reform Ministry on their first appeal to the new constituency which they had created, had been fatally complete. But the triumph was as destructive to the victors as to the vanquished.

'We are too strong,' prophetically exclaimed one of the fortunate cabinet, which found itself supported by an inconceivable majority of three hundred. It is to be hoped that some future publisher of private memoirs may have preserved some of the traits of that crude and short-lived parliament, when old Cobbett insolently thrust Sir Robert from the prescriptive seat

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of the chief of opposition, and treasury understrappers sneered at the 'queer lot' that had arrived from Ireland, little foreseeing what a high bidding that 'queer lot' would eventually command. Gratitude to Lord Grey was the hustings-cry at the end of 1832, the pretext that was to return to the new-modelled House of Commons none but men devoted to the Whig cause. The successful simulation, like everything that is false, carried within it the seeds of its own dissolution. Ingratitude to Lord Grey was more the fashion at the commencement of 1834, and before the close of that eventful year, the once popular Reform Ministry was upset, and the eagerly-sought Reformed Parliament dissolved!

It can scarcely be alleged that the public was altogether unprepared for this catastrophe. Many deemed it inevitable; few thought it imminent. The career of the Ministry, and the existence of the Parliament, had indeed from the first been turbulent and fitful. It was known, from authority, that there were dissensions in the cabinet, while a House of Commons which passed votes on subjects not less important than the repeal of a tax, or the impeachment of a judge, on one night, and rescinded its resolutions on the following, certainly established no increased claims to the confidence of its constituents in its discretion. Nevertheless, there existed at this period a prevalent conviction that the Whig party, by a great stroke of state, similar in magnitude and effect to that which in the preceding century had changed the dynasty had secured to themselves the government of this country for, at least, the lives of the present generation. And even the well-informed in such matters were inclined to look upon the perplexing circumstances to which

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we have alluded rather as symptoms of a want of discipline in a new system of tactics, than as evidences of any essential and deeply-rooted disorder.

The startling rapidity, however, of the strange incidents of 1834; the indignant, soon to become vituperative, secession of a considerable section of the cabinet, some of them esteemed too at that time among its most efficient members; the piteous deprecation of 'pressure from without,' from lips hitherto deemed too stately for entreaty, followed by the Trades' Union, thirty thousand strong, parading in procession to Downing-street; the Irish negotiations of Lord Hatherton, strange blending of complex intrigue and almost infantile ingenuousness; the still inexplicable resignation of Lord Althorp, hurriedly followed by his still more mysterious resumption of power, the only result of his precipitate movements being the fall of Lord Grey himself, attended by circumstances which even a friendly historian could scarcely describe as honourable to his party or dignified to himself; latterly, the extemporaneous address of King William to the Bishops; the vagrant and grotesque apocalypse of the Lord Chancellor; and the fierce recrimination and memorable defiance of the Edinburgh banquet, all these impressive instances of public affairs and public conduct had combined to create a predominant opinion that, whatever might be the consequences, the prolonged continuance of the present party in power was a clear impossibility.

It is evident that the suicidal career of what was then styled the Liberal party had been occasioned and stimulated by its unnatural excess of strength. The apoplectic plethora of 1834 was not less fatal than the paralytic tenuity of 1841. It was not feasible to

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gratify so many ambitions, or to satisfy so many expectations. Every man had his double; the heels of every placeman were dogged by friendly rivals ready to trip them up. There were even two cabinets; the one that met in council, and the one that met in cabal. The consequence of destroying the legitimate Opposition of the country was, that a moiety of the supporters of Government had to discharge the duties of Opposition.

Herein, then, we detect the real cause of all that irregular and unsettled carriage of public men which so perplexed the nation after the passing of the Reform Act. No government can be long secure without a formidable Opposition. It reduces their supporters to that tractable number which can be managed by the joint influences of fruition and of hope. It offers vengeance to the discontented, and distinction to the ambitious; and employs the energies of aspiring spirits, who otherwise may prove traitors in a division or assassins in a debate.

The general election of 1832 abrogated the Parliamentary Opposition of England, which had practically existed for more than a century and a half. And what a series of equivocal transactions and mortifying adventures did the withdrawal of this salutary restraint entail on the party which then so loudly congratulated themselves and the country that they were at length relieved from its odious repression! In the hurry of existence one is apt too generally to pass over the political history of the times in which we ourselves live. The two years that followed the Reform of the House of Commons are full of instruction, on which a young man would do well to ponder. It is hardly possible that he could rise from the study of these

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annals without a confirmed disgust for political intrigue; a dazzling practice, apt at first to fascinate youth, for it appeals at once to our invention and our courage, but one which really should only be the resource of the second-rate. Great minds must trust to great truths and great talents for their rise, and nothing else.

While, however, as the autumn of 1834 advanced, the people of this country became gradually sensible of the necessity of some change in the councils of their Sovereign, no man felt capable of predicting by what means it was to be accomplished, or from what quarry the new materials were to be extracted. The Tory party, according to those perverted views of Toryism unhappily too long prevalent in this country, was held to be literary defunct, except by a few old battered crones of office, crouched round the embers of faction which they were fanning, and muttering 'reaction' in mystic whispers. It cannot be supposed indeed for a moment, that the distinguished personage who had led that party in the House of Commons previously to the passing of the act of 1832, ever despaired in consequence of his own career. His then time of life, the perfection, almost the prime, of manhood; his parliamentary practice, doubly estimable in an inexperienced assembly; his political knowledge; his fair character and reputable position; his talents and tone as a public speaker, which he had always aimed to adapt to the habits and culture of that middle class from which it was concluded the benches of the new Parliament were mainly to be recruited,—all these were qualities the possession of which must have assured a mind not apt to be disturbed in its calculations by any intem-

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perate heats, that with time and patience the game was yet for him.

Unquestionably, whatever may have been insinuated, the distinguished person had no inkling that his services in 1834 might be claimed by his Sovereign. At the close of the session of that year he had quitted England with his family, and had arrived at Rome, where it was his intention to pass the winter. The party charges that have imputed to him a previous and sinister knowledge of the intentions of the Court, appear to have been made not only in ignorance of the personal character, but of the real position, of the future minister.

It had been the misfortune of this eminent gentleman, when he first entered public life, to become identified with a political connection which, having arrogated to itself the name of an illustrious historical party, pursued a policy which was either founded on no principle whatever, or on principles exactly contrary to those which had always guided the conduct of the great Tory leaders. The chief members of this official confederacy were men distinguished by none of the conspicuous qualities of statesmen. They had none of the divine gifts that govern senates and guide councils. They were not orators; they were not men of deep thought or happy resource, or of penetrative and sagacious minds. Their political ken was essentially dull and contracted. They expended some energy in obtaining a defective, blundering acquaintance with foreign affairs; they knew as little of the real state of their own country as savages of an approaching eclipse. This factious league had shuffled themselves into power by clinging to the skirts of a great minister, the last of Tory statesmen,

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who, in the unparalleled and confounding emergencies of his latter years, had been forced, unfortunately for England, to relinquish Toryism. His successors inherited all his errors without the latent genius which in him might have still rallied and extricated him from the consequences of his disasters. His successors did not merely inherit his errors; they exaggerated, they caricatured them. They rode into power on a spring-tide of all the rampant prejudices and rancorous passions of their time. From the King to the boor their policy was a mere pandering to public ignorance. Impudently usurping the name of that party of which nationality, and therefore universality, is the essence, these pseudo-Tories made Exclusion the principle of their political constitution, and Restriction the genius of their commercial code.

The blind goddess that plays with human fortunes has mixed up the memory of these men with traditions of national glory. They conducted to a prosperous conclusion the most renowned war in which England has ever been engaged. Yet every military conception that emanated from their cabinet was branded by their characteristic want of grandeur. Chance, however, sent them a great military genius, whom they treated for a long time with indifference, and whom they never heartily supported until his career had made him their master. His transcendent exploits, and European events even greater than his achievements, placed in the manikin grasp of the English ministry the settlement of Europe.

The act of the Congress of Vienna remains the eternal monument of their diplomatic knowledge and political sagacity. Their capital feats were the creation of two kingdoms, both of which are already erased

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from the map of Europe. They made no single preparation for the inevitable, almost impending, conjunctures of the East. All that remains of the pragmatic arrangements of the mighty Congress of Vienna is the mediatisation of the petty German princes.

But the settlement of Europe by the pseudo-Tories was the dictate of inspiration compared with their settlement of England. The peace of Paris found the government of this country in the hands of a body of men of whom it is no exaggeration to say that they were ignorant of every principle of every branch of political science. So long as our domestic administration was confined merely to the raising of a revenue, they levied taxes with gross facility from the industry of a country too busy to criticise or complain. But when the excitement and distraction of war had ceased, and they were forced to survey the social elements that surrounded them, they seemed, for the first time, to have become conscious of their own incapacity. These men, indeed, were the mere children of routine. They prided themselves on being practical men. In the language of this defunct school of statesmen, a practical man is a man who practises the blunders of his predecessors.

Now commenced that Condition-of-England Question of which our generation hears so much. During five-and-twenty years every influence than can develop the energies and resources of a nation had been acting with concentrated stimulation on the British Isles. National peril and national glory; the perpetual menace of invasion, the continual triumph of conquest; the most extensive foreign commerce that was ever conducted by a single nation; an illimitable currency; an internal trade supported by swarm-

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ing millions, whom manufactures and inclosure-bills summoned into existence; above all, the supreme control obtained by man over mechanic power, these are some of the causes of that rapid advance of material civilisation in England to which the annals of the world can afford no parallel. But there was no proportionate advance in our moral civilisation. In the hurry-skurry of money-making, men-making, and machine-making, we had altogether outgrown, not the spirit, but the organisation, of our institutions.

The peace came; the stimulating influences suddenly ceased; the people, in a novel and painful position, found themselves without guides. They went to the ministry; they asked to be guided; they asked to be governed. Commerce requested a code; trade required a currency; the unfranchised subject solicited his equal privilege; suffering labour clamoured for its rights; a new race demanded education. What did the ministry do?

They fell into a panic. Having fulfilled during their lives the duties of administration, they were frightened because they were called upon, for the first time, to perform the functions of government. Like all weak men, they had recourse to what they called strong measures. They determined to put down the multitude. They thought they were imitating Mr. Pitt, because they mistook disorganisation for sedition.

Their projects of relief were as ridiculous as their system of coercion was ruthless; both were alike founded in intense ignorance. When we recall Mr. Vansittart with his currency resolutions; Lord Castlereagh with his plans for the employment of labour; and Lord Sidmouth with his plots for ensnaring the

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laborious, we are tempted to imagine that the present epoch has been one of peculiar advances in political ability, and marvel how England could have attained her present pitch under a series of such governors.

We should, however, be labouring under a very erroneous impression. Run over the statesmen that have figured in England since the accession of the present family, and we may doubt whether there be one, with the exception perhaps of the Duke of Newcastle, who would have been a worthy colleague of the council of Mr. Perceval, or the early cabinet of Lord Liverpool. Assuredly the genius of Bolingbroke and the sagacity of Walpole would have alike recoiled from such men and such measures. And if we take the individuals who were governing England immediately before the French Revolution, one need only refer to the speeches of Mr. Pitt, and especially to those of that profound statesman and most instructed man, Lord Shelburne, to find that we can boast no remarkable superiority either in political justice or in political economy. One must attribute this degeneracy, therefore, to the long war and our insular position, acting upon men naturally of inferior abilities, and unfortunately, in addition, of illiterate habits.

In the meantime, notwithstanding all the efforts of the political Panglosses who, in evening Journals and Quarterly Reviews, were continually proving that this was the best of all possible governments, it was evident to the ministry itself that the machine must stop. The class of Rigbys indeed at this period, one eminently favourable to that fungous tribe, greatly distinguished themselves. They demonstrated in a manner absolutely convincing, that it was impossible for

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any person to possess any ability, knowledge, or virtue, any capacity of reasoning, any ray of fancy or faculty of imagination, who was not a supporter of the existing administration. If any one impeached the management of a department, the public was assured that the accuser had embezzled; if any one complained of the conduct of a colonial governor, the complainant was announced as a returned convict. An amelioration of the criminal code was discountenanced because a search in the parish register of an obscure village proved that the proposer had not been born in wedlock. A relaxation of the commercial system was denounced because one of its principal advocates was a Socinian. The inutility of Parliamentary Reform was ever obvious since Mr. Rigby was a member of the House of Commons.

To us, with our *Times* newspaper every morning on our breakfast-table, bringing, on every subject which can interest the public mind, a degree of information and intelligence which must form a security against any prolonged public misconception, it seems incredible that only five-and-twenty years ago the English mind could have been so ridden and hoodwinked, and that, too, by men of mean attainments and moderate abilities. But the war had directed the energies of the English people into channels by no means favourable to political education. Conquerors of the world, with their ports filled with the shipping of every clime, and their manufactories supplying the European continent, in the art of self-government, that art in which their fathers excelled, they had become literally children; and Rigby and his brother hirelings were the nurses that frightened them with hideous fables and ugly words.

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Notwithstanding, however, all this successful mystification, the Arch-Mediocrity who presided, rather than ruled, over this Cabinet of Mediocrities, became hourly more conscious that the inevitable transition from fulfilling the duties of an administration to performing the functions of a government could not be conducted without talents and knowledge. The Arch-Mediocrity had himself some glimmering traditions of political science. He was sprung from a laborious stock, had received some training, and, though not a statesman, might be classed among those whom the Lord Keeper Williams used to call 'statemongers.' In a subordinate position his meagre diligence and his frigid method might not have been without value; but the qualities that he possessed were misplaced; nor can any character be conceived less invested with the happy properties of a leader. In the conduct of public affairs his disposition was exactly the reverse of that which is the characteristic of great men. He was peremptory in little questions, and great ones he left open.

In the natural course of events, in 1819 there ought to have been a change of government, and another party in the state should have entered into office; but the Whigs, though they counted in their ranks at that period an unusual number of men of great ability, and formed, indeed, a compact and spirited opposition, were unable to contend against the new adjustment of borough influence which had occurred during the war, under the protracted administration by which that war had been conducted. New families had arisen on the Tory side that almost rivalled old Newcastle himself in their electioneering management; and it was evident that, unless some reconstruction

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of the House of Commons could be effected, the Whig party could never obtain a permanent hold of official power. Hence, from that period, the Whigs became Parliamentary Reformers.

It was inevitable, therefore, that the country should be governed by the same party; indispensable that the ministry should be renovated by new brains and blood. Accordingly, a Mediocrity, not without repugnance, was induced to withdraw, and the great name of Wellington supplied his place in council. The talents of the Duke, as they were then understood, were not exactly of the kind most required by the cabinet, and his colleagues were careful that he should not occupy too prominent a post; but still it was an impressive acquisition, and imparted to the ministry a semblance of renown.

There was an individual who had not long entered public life, but who had already filled considerable, though still subordinate, offices. Having acquired a certain experience of the duties of administration, and distinction for his mode of fulfilling them, he had withdrawn from his public charge; perhaps because he found it a barrier to the attainment of that parliamentary reputation for which he had already shown both a desire and a capacity; perhaps, because being young and independent, he was not over-anxious irremediably to identify his career with a school of politics of the infallibility of which his experience might have already made him a little sceptical. But he possessed the talents that were absolutely wanted, and the terms were at his own dictation. Another, and a very distinguished Mediocrity, who would not resign, was thrust out, and Mr. Peel became Secretary of State.

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From this moment dates that intimate connection between the Duke of Wellington and the present First Minister, which has exercised a considerable influence over the career of individuals and the course of affairs. It was the sympathetic result of superior minds placed among inferior intelligences, and was, doubtless, assisted by a then mutual conviction, that the difference of age, the circumstance of sitting in different houses, and the general contrast of their previous pursuits and accomplishments, rendered personal rivalry out of the question. From this moment, too, the domestic government of the country assumed a new character, and one universally admitted to have been distinguished by a spirit of enlightened progress and comprehensive amelioration.

A short time after this, a third and most distinguished Mediocrity died; and Canning, whom they had twice worried out of the cabinet, where they had tolerated him some time in an obscure and ambiguous position, was recalled just in time from his impending banishment, installed in the first post in the Lower House, and intrusted with the seals of the Foreign Office. The Duke of Wellington had coveted them, nor could Lord Liverpool have been insensible to his Grace's peculiar fitness for such duties; but strength was required in the House of Commons, where they had only one Secretary of State, a young man already distinguished, yet untried as a leader, and surrounded by colleagues notoriously incapable to assist him in debate.

The accession of Mr. Canning to the cabinet, in a position, too, of surpassing influence, soon led to a further weeding of the Mediocrities, and, among other introductions, to the memorable entrance of Mr. Hus-

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kisson. In this wise did that cabinet, once notable only for the absence of all those qualities which authorise the possession of power, come to be generally esteemed as a body of men, who, for parliamentary eloquence, official practice, political information, sagacity in council, and a due understanding of their epoch, were inferior to none that had directed the policy of the empire since the Revolution.

If we survey the tenor of the policy of the Liverpool Cabinet during the latter moiety of its continuance, we shall find its characteristic to be a partial recurrence to those frank principles of government which Mr. Pitt had revived during the latter part of the last century from precedents that had been set us, either in practice or in dogma, during its earlier period, by statesmen who then not only bore the title, but professed the opinions, of Tories. Exclusive principles in the constitution, and restrictive principles in commerce, have grown up together; and have really nothing in common with the ancient character of our political settlement, or the manners and customs of the English people. Confidence in the loyalty of the nation, testified by munificent grants of rights and franchises, and favour to an expansive system of traffic, were distinctive qualities of the English sovereignty, until the House of Commons usurped the better portion of its prerogatives. A widening of our electoral scheme, great facilities to commerce, and the rescue of our Roman Catholic fellow-subjects from the Puritanic yoke, from fetters which have been fastened on them by English Parliaments in spite of the protests and exertions of English Sovereigns,—these were the three great elements and fundamental truths of the real Pitt system, a system founded on the tra-

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ditions of our monarchy, and caught from the writings, the speeches, the councils of those who, for the sake of these and analogous benefits, had ever been anxious that the Sovereign of England should never be degraded into the position of a Venetian Doge.

It is in the plunder of the Church that we must seek for the primary cause of our political exclusion, and our commercial restraint. That unhallowed booty created a factitious aristocracy, ever fearful that they might be called upon to regorge their sacrilegious spoil. To prevent this they took refuge in political religionism, and paltering with the disturbed consciences, or the pious fantasies, of a portion of the people, they organised them into religious sects. These became the unconscious Prætorians of their ill-gotten domains. At the head of these religionists, they have continued ever since to govern, or powerfully to influence, this country. They have in that time pulled down thrones and churches, changed dynasties, abrogated and remodelled parliaments; they have disfranchised Scotland, and confiscated Ireland. One may admire the vigour and consistency of the Whig party, and recognise in their career that unity of purpose that can only spring from a great principle; but the Whigs introduced sectarian religion, sectarian religion led to political exclusion, and political exclusion was soon accompanied by commercial restraint.

It would be fanciful to assume that the Liverpool Cabinet, in their ameliorating career, was directed by any desire to recur to the primordial tenets of the Tory party. That was not an epoch when statesmen cared to prosecute the investigation of principles. It was a period of happy and enlightened practice. A

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profounder policy is the offspring of a time like the present, when the original postulates of institutions are called in question. The Liverpool Cabinet unconsciously approximated to these opinions, because from careful experiment they were convinced of their beneficial tendency, and they thus bore an unintentional and impartial testimony to their truth. Like many men who think they are inventors, they were only reproducing ancient wisdom.

But one must ever deplore that this ministry, with all their talents and generous ardour, did not advance to principles. It is always perilous to adopt expediency as a guide; but the choice may be sometimes imperative. These statesmen, however, took expediency for their director when principle would have given them all that expediency ensured, and much more.

This ministry, strong in the confidence of the sovereign, the parliament, and the people, might, by the courageous promulgation of great historical truths, have gradually formed a public opinion, that would have permitted them to organise the Tory party on a broad, a permanent, and a national basis. They might have nobly effected a complete settlement of Ireland, which a shattered section of this very cabinet was forced a few years after to do partially, and in an equivocating and equivocal manner. They might have concluded a satisfactory reconstruction of the third estate, without producing that convulsion with which, from its violent fabrication, our social system still vibrates. Lastly, they might have adjusted the rights and properties of our national industries in a manner which would have prevented that fierce and fatal rivalry that is now disturbing every hearth of the United Kingdom.

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We may, therefore, visit on the *laches* of this ministry the introduction of that new principle and power into our constitution which ultimately may absorb all, AGITATION. This cabinet, then, with so much brilliancy on its surface, is the real parent of the Roman Catholic Association, the Political Unions, the Anti-Corn-Law League.

There is no influence at the same time so powerful and so singular as that of individual character. It arises as often from the weakness of the character as from its strength. The dispersion of this clever and showy ministry is a fine illustration of this truth. One morning the Arch-Mediocrity himself died. At the first blush, it would seem that little difficulties could be experienced in finding his substitute. His long occupation of the post proved, at any rate, that the qualification was not excessive. But this cabinet, with its serene and blooming visage, had been all this time charged with fierce and emulous ambitions. They waited the signal, but they waited in grim repose. The death of the nominal leader, whose formal superiority, wounding no vanity and offending no pride, secured in their councils equality among the able, was the tocsin of their anarchy. There existed in this cabinet two men who were resolved immediately to be prime ministers; a third who was resolved eventually to be prime minister, but would at any rate occupy no ministerial post without the lead of a House of Parliament; and a fourth, who felt himself capable of being prime minister, but despaired of the revolution which could alone make him one; and who found an untimely end when that revolution had arrived.

Had Mr. Secretary Canning remained leader of the

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House of Commons under the Duke of Wellington, all that he would have gained by the death of Lord Liverpool was a master. Had the Duke of Wellington become Secretary of State under Mr. Canning he would have materially advanced his political position, not only by holding the seals of a high department in which he was calculated to excel, but by becoming leader of the House of Lords. But his Grace was induced by certain court intriguers to believe that the King would send for him, and he was also aware that Mr. Peel would no longer serve under any minister in the House of Commons. Under any circumstances it would have been impossible to keep the Liverpool Cabinet together. The struggle, therefore, between the Duke of Wellington and 'my dear Mr. Canning' was internecine, and ended somewhat unexpectedly.

And here we must stop to do justice to our friend Mr. Rigby, whose conduct on this occasion was distinguished by a bustling dexterity which was quite charming. He had, as we have before intimated, on the credit of some clever lampoons written during the Queen's trial, which were, in fact, the effusions of Lucian Gay, wriggled himself into a sort of occasional unworthy favour at the palace, where he was half butt and half buffoon. Here, during the interregnum occasioned by the death, or rather inevitable retirement, of Lord Liverpool, Mr. Rigby contrived to scrape up a conviction that the Duke was the winning horse, and in consequence there appeared a series of leading articles in a notorious evening newspaper, in which it was, as Tadpole and Taper declared, most 'slashingly' shown, that the son of an actress could never be tolerated as a Prime Minister

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of England. Not content with this, and never doubting for a moment the authentic basis of his persuasion, Mr. Rigby poured forth his coarse volubility on the subject at several of the new clubs which he was getting up in order to revenge himself for having been black-balled at White's.

What with arrangements about Lord Monmouth's boroughs, and the lucky bottling of some claret which the Duke had imported on Mr. Rigby's recommendation, this distinguished gentleman contrived to pay almost hourly visits at Apsley House, and so bullied Tadpole and Taper that they scarcely dared address him. About four-and-twenty hours before the result, and when it was generally supposed that the Duke was in, Mr. Rigby, who had gone down to Windsor to ask his Majesty the date of some obscure historical incident, which Rigby, of course, very well knew, found that audiences were impossible, that Majesty was agitated, and learned, from an humble but secure authority, that in spite of all his slashing articles, and Lucian Gay's parodies of the Irish melodies, Canning was to be Prime Minister.

This would seem something of a predicament! To common minds, there are no such things as scrapes for gentlemen with Mr. Rigby's talents for action. He had indeed, in the world, the credit of being an adept in machinations, and was supposed ever to be involved in profound and complicated contrivances. This was quite a mistake. There was nothing profound about Mr. Rigby; and his intellect was totally incapable of devising or sustaining an intricate or continuous scheme. He was, in short, a man who neither felt nor thought; but who possessed, in a very remarkable degree, a restless instinct for adroit base-

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ness. On the present occasion he got into his carriage, and drove at the utmost speed from Windsor to the Foreign Office. The Secretary of State was engaged when he arrived; but Mr. Rigby would listen to no difficulties. He rushed upstairs, flung open the door, and with agitated countenance, and eyes suffused with tears, threw himself into the arms of the astonished Mr. Canning.

'All is right,' exclaimed the devoted Rigby, in broken tones; 'I have convinced the King that the First Minister must be in the House of Commons. No one knows it but myself; but it is certain.'

We have seen that at an early period of his career, Mr. Peel withdrew from official life. His course had been one of unbroken prosperity; the hero of the University had become the favourite of the House of Commons. His retreat, therefore, was not prompted by chagrin. Nor need it have been suggested by a calculating ambition, for the ordinary course of events was fast bearing to him all to which man could aspire. One might rather suppose, that he had already gained sufficient experience, perhaps in his Irish Secretaryship, to make him pause in that career of superficial success which education and custom had hitherto chalked out for him, rather than the creative energies of his own mind. A thoughtful intellect may have already detected elements in our social system which required a finer observation, and a more unbroken study, than the gyves and trammels of office would permit. He may have discovered that the representation of the University, looked upon in those days as the blue ribbon of the House of Commons, was a sufficient fetter without unnecessarily adding to its restraint. He may have wished to reserve him-

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self for a happier occasion, and a more progressive period. He may have felt the strong necessity of arresting himself in his rapid career of felicitous routine, to survey his position in calmness, and to comprehend the stirring age that was approaching.

For that, he could not but be conscious that the education which he had consummated, however ornate and refined, was not sufficient. That age of economical statesmanship which Lord Shelburne had predicted in 1787, when he demolished, in the House of Lords, Bishop Watson and the Balance of Trade, which Mr. Pitt had comprehended, and for which he was preparing the nation when the French Revolution diverted the public mind into a stronger and more turbulent current, was again impending, while the intervening history of the country had been prolific in events which had aggravated the necessity of investigating the sources of the wealth of nations. The time had arrived when parliamentary pre-eminence could no longer be achieved or maintained by gorgeous abstractions borrowed from Burke, or shallow systems purloined from De Lolme, adorned with Horatian points, or varied with Virgilian passages. It was to be an age of abstruse disquisition, that required a compact and sinewy intellect, nurtured in a class of learning not yet honoured in colleges, and which might arrive at conclusions conflicting with predominant prejudices.

Adopting this view of the position of Mr. Peel, strengthened as it is by his early withdrawal for awhile from the direction of public affairs, it may not only be a charitable but a true estimate of the motives which influenced him in his conduct towards Mr. Canning, to conclude that he was not guided in

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that transaction by the disingenuous rivalry usually imputed to him. His statement in Parliament of the determining circumstances of his conduct, coupled with his subsequent and almost immediate policy, may perhaps always leave this a painful and ambiguous passage in his career; but in passing judgment on public men, it behoves us ever to take large and extended views of their conduct; and previous incidents will often satisfactorily explain subsequent events, which, without their illustrating aid, are involved in misapprehension or mystery.

It would seem, therefore, that Sir Robert Peel, from an early period, meditated his emancipation from the political confederacy in which he was implicated, and that he has been continually baffled in this project. He broke loose from Lord Liverpool; he retired from Mr. Canning. Forced again into becoming the subordinate leader of the weakest government in parliamentary annals, he believed he had at length achieved his emancipation, when he declared to his late colleagues, after the overthrow of 1830, that he would never again accept a secondary position in office. But the Duke of Wellington was too old a tactician to lose so valuable an ally. So his Grace declared after the Reform Bill was passed, as its inevitable result, that thenceforth the Prime Minister must be a member of the House of Commons; and this aphorism, cited as usual by the Duke's parasites as demonstration of his supreme sagacity, was a graceful mode of resigning the pre-eminence which had been productive of such great party disasters. It is remarkable that the party who devised and passed the Reform Bill, and who, in consequence, governed the nation for ten years, never once had their Prime

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Minister in the House of Commons: but that does not signify; the Duke's maxim is still quoted as an oracle almost equal in prescience to his famous query, 'How is the King's government to be carried on?' a question to which his Grace by this time has contrived to give a tolerably practical answer.

Sir Robert Peel, who had escaped from Lord Liverpool, escaped from Mr. Canning, escaped even from the Duke of Wellington in 1832, was at length caught in 1834; the victim of ceaseless intriguers, who neither comprehended his position, nor that of their country.

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CHAPTER XIII.

Beaumanoir.

EAUMANOIR was one of those Palladian palaces, vast and ornate, such as the genius of Kent and Campbell delighted in at the beginning of the eighteenth century. Placed on a noble elevation, yet screened from the northern blast, its sumptuous front, connected with its far-spreading wings by Corinthian colonnades, was the boast and pride of the midland counties. The surrounding gardens, equalling in extent the size of ordinary parks, were crowded with temples dedicated to abstract virtues and to departed friends. Occasionally a triumphal arch celebrated a general whom the family still esteemed a hero; and sometimes a votive column commemorated the great statesman who had advanced the family a step in the peerage. Beyond the limits of this pleasance the hart and hind wandered in a wilderness abounding in ferny coverts and green and stately trees.

The noble proprietor of this demesne had many of the virtues of his class; a few of their failings. He had that public spirit which became his station. He was not one of those who avoided the exertions and

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the sacrifices which should be inseparable from high position, by the hollow pretext of a taste for privacy, and a devotion to domestic joys. He was munificent, tender, and bounteous to the poor, and loved a flowing hospitality. A keen sportsman, he was not untinctured by letters, and had indeed a cultivated taste for the fine arts. Though an ardent politician, he was tolerant to adverse opinions, and full of amenity to his opponents. A firm supporter of the corn-laws, he never refused a lease. Notwithstanding there ran through his whole demeanour and the habit of his mind, a vein of native simplicity that was full of charm, his manner was finished. He never offended any one's self-love. His good breeding, indeed, sprang from the only sure source of gentle manners, a kind heart. To have pained others would have pained himself. Perhaps, too, this noble sympathy may have been in some degree prompted by the ancient blood in his veins, an accident of lineage rather rare with the English nobility. One could hardly praise him for the strong affections that bound him to his hearth, for fortune had given him the most pleasing family in the world; but, above all, a peerless wife.

The Duchess was one of those women who are the delight of existence. She was sprung from a house not inferior to that with which she had blended, and was gifted with that rare beauty which time ever spares, so that she seemed now only the elder sister of her own beautiful daughters. She, too, was distinguished by that perfect good breeding which is the result of nature and not of education: for it may be found in a cottage, and may be missed in a palace. 'Tis a genial regard for the feelings of others that springs from an absence of selfishness. The

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Duchess, indeed, was in every sense a fine lady; her manners were refined and full of dignity; but nothing in the world could have induced her to appear bored when another was addressing or attempting to amuse her. She was not one of those vulgar fine ladies who meet you one day with a vacant stare, as if unconscious of your existence, and address you on another in a tone of impertinent familiarity. Her temper, perhaps, was somewhat quick, which made this consideration for the feelings of others still more admirable, for it was the result of a strict moral discipline acting on a good heart. Although the best of wives and mothers, she had some charity for her neighbours. Needing herself no indulgence, she could be indulgent; and would by no means favour that strait-laced morality that would constrain the innocent play of the social body. She was accomplished, well read, and had a lively fancy. Add to this that sunbeam of a happy home, a gay and cheerful spirit in its mistress, and one might form some faint idea of this gracious personage.

The eldest son of this house was now on the continent; of his two younger brothers, one was with his regiment and the other was Coningsby's friend at Eton, our Henry Sydney. The two elder daughters had just married, on the same day, and at the same altar; and the remaining one, Theresa, was still a child.

The Duke had occupied a chief post in the Household under the late administration, and his present guests consisted chiefly of his former colleagues in office. There were several members of the late cabinet, several members for his Grace's late boroughs, looking very much like martyrs, full of suffering

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and of hope. Mr. Tadpole and Mr. Taper were also there; they too had lost their seats since 1832; but being men of business, and accustomed from early life to look about them, they had already commenced the combinations which on a future occasion were to bear them back to the assembly where they were so missed.

Taper had his eye on a small constituency which had escaped the fatal schedules, and where he had what they called a 'connection;' that is to say, a section of the suffrages who had a lively remembrance of Treasury favours once bestowed by Mr. Taper, and who had not been so liberally dealt with by the existing powers. This connection of Taper was in time to leaven the whole mass of the constituent body, and make it rise in full rebellion against its present liberal representative, who being one of a majority of three hundred, could get nothing when he called at Whitehall or Downing Street.

Tadpole, on the contrary, who was of a larger grasp of mind than Taper, with more of imagination and device but not so safe a man, was coquetting with a manufacturing town and a large constituency, where he was to succeed by the aid of the Wesleyans, of which pious body he had suddenly become a fervent admirer. The great Mr. Rigby, too, was a guest out of Parliament, nor caring to be in; but hearing that his friends had some hopes, he thought he would just come down to dash them.

The political grapes were sour for Mr. Rigby; a prophet of evil, he preached only mortification and repentance and despair to his late colleagues. It was the only satisfaction left Mr. Rigby, except assuring the Duke that the finest pictures in his gallery were

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copies, and recommending him to pull down Beaumanoir, and rebuild it on a design with which Mr. Rigby would furnish him.

The battue and the banquet were over; the ladies had withdrawn; and the butler placed fresh claret on the table.

'And you really think you could give us a majority, Tadpole?' said the Duke.

Mr. Tadpole, with some ceremony, took a memorandum-book out of his pocket, amid the smiles and the faint well-bred merriment of his friends.

'Tadpole is nothing without his book,' whispered Lord Fitz-Booby.

'It is here,' said Mr. Tadpole, emphatically patting his volume, 'clear working majority of twenty-two.'

'Near sailing that!' cried the Duke.

'A far better majority than the present Government have,' said Mr. Tadpole.

'There is nothing like a good small majority,' said Mr. Taper, 'and a good registration.'

'Ay! register, register, register!' said the Duke. 'Those were immortal words.'

'I can tell your Grace three far better ones,' said Mr. Tadpole, with a self-complacent air. 'Object, object, object!'

'You may register, and you may object,' said Mr. Rigby, 'but you will never get rid of Schedule A and Schedule B.'

'But who could have supposed two years ago that affairs would be in their present position?' said Mr. Taper, deferentially.

'I foretold it,' said Mr. Rigby. 'Every one knows that no government now can last twelve months.'

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'We may make fresh boroughs,' said Taper. 'We have reduced Shabbyton at the last registration under three hundred.'

'And the Wesleyans!' said Tadpole. 'We never counted on the Wesleyans!'

'I am told these Wesleyans are really a respectable body,' said Lord Fitz-Booby. 'I believe there is no material difference between their tenets and those of the Establishment. I never heard of them much till lately. We have too long confounded them with the mass of Dissenters, but their conduct at several of the later elections prove that they are far from being unreasonable and disloyal individuals. When we come in, something should be done for the Wesleyans, eh, Rigby?'

'All that your Lordship can do for the Wesleyans is what they will very shortly do for themselves—appropriate a portion of the Church Revenues to their own use.'

'Nay, nay,' said Mr. Tadpole with a chuckle, 'I don't think we shall find the Church attacked again in a hurry. I only wish they would try! A good Church cry before a registration,' he continued, rubbing his hands; 'eh, my lord, I think that would do.'

'But how are we to turn them out?' said the Duke.

'Ah!' said Mr. Taper, 'that is a great question.'

'What do you think of a repeal of the Malt Tax?' said Lord Fitz-Booby. 'They have been trying it on in ——shire, and I am told it goes down very well.'

'No repeal of any tax,' said Taper, sincerely shocked, and shaking his head; 'and the Malt Tax of all others. I am all against that.'

'It is a very good cry though, if there be no other,' said Tadpole.

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'I am all for a religious cry,' said Taper. 'It means nothing, and, if successful, does not interfere with business when we are in.'

'You will have religious cries enough in a short time,' said Mr. Rigby, rather wearied of any one speaking but himself, and thereat he commenced a discourse, which was, in fact, one of his 'slashing' articles *in petto* on Church Reform, and which abounded in parallels between the present affairs and those of the reign of Charles I. Tadpole, who did not pretend to know anything but the state of the registration, and Taper, whose political reading was confined to an intimate acquaintance with the Red Book and Beatson's Political Index, which he could repeat backwards, were silenced. The Duke, who was well instructed and liked to be talked to, sipped his claret, and was rather amused by Rigby's lecture, particularly by one or two statements characterised by Rigby's happy audacity, but which the Duke was too indolent to question. Lord Fitz-Booby listened with his mouth open, but rather bored. At length, when there was a momentary pause, he said:

'In my time, the regular thing was to move an amendment on the address.'

'Quite out of the question,' exclaimed Tadpole, with a scoff.

'Entirely given up,' said Taper, with a sneer.

'If you will drink no more claret, we will go and hear some music,' said the Duke.

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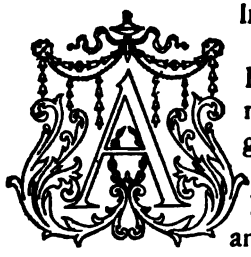
CHAPTER XIV.

Important News.



BREAKFAST at Beaumanoir was a meal of some ceremony. Every guest was expected to attend, and at a somewhat early hour. Their host and hostess set them the example of punctuality. 'Tis an old form rigidly adhered to in some great houses, but, it must be confessed, does not contrast very agreeably with the easier arrangements of establishments of less pretension and of more modern order.

The morning after the dinner to which we have been recently introduced, there was one individual absent from the breakfast-table whose non-appearance could scarcely be passed over without notice; and several inquired with some anxiety, whether their host were indisposed.

'The Duke has received some letters from London which detain him,' replied the Duchess. 'He will join us.'

'Your Grace will be glad to hear that your son Henry is very well,' said Mr. Rigby; 'I heard of him this morning. Harry Coningsby enclosed me a letter for his grandfather, and tells me that he and Henry

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Sydney had just had a capital run with the King's hounds.'

'It is three years since we have seen Mr. Coningsby,' said the Duchess. 'Once he was often here. He was a great favourite of mine. I hardly ever knew a more interesting boy.'

'Yes, I have done a great deal for him,' said Mr. Rigby. 'Lord Monmouth is fond of him, and wishes that he should make a figure; but how any one is to distinguish himself now, I am really at a loss to comprehend.'

'But are affairs so very bad?' said the Duchess, smiling. 'I thought that we were all regaining our good sense and good temper.'

'I believe all the good sense and all the good temper in England are concentrated in your Grace,' said Mr. Rigby, gallantly.

'I should be sorry to be such a monopolist. But Lord Fitz-Booby was giving me last night quite a glowing report of Mr. Tadpole's prospects for the nation. We were all to have our own again; and Percy to carry the county.'

'My dear madam, before twelve months are past, there will not be a county in England. Why should there be? If boroughs are to be disfranchised, why should not counties be destroyed?'

At this moment the Duke entered, apparently agitated. He bowed to his guests, and apologised for his unusual absence. 'The truth is,' he continued, 'I have just received a very important despatch. An event has occurred which may materially affect affairs. Lord Spencer is dead.'

A thunderbolt in a summer sky, as Sir William Temple says, could not have produced a greater sen-

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sation. The business of the repast ceased in a moment. The knives and forks were suddenly silent. All was still.

'It is an immense event,' said Tadpole.

'I don't see my way,' said Taper.

'When did he die?' said Lord Fitz-Booby.

'I don't believe it,' said Mr. Rigby.

'They have got their man ready,' said Tadpole.

'It is impossible to say what will happen,' said Taper.

'Now is the time for an amendment on the address,' said Fitz-Booby.

'There are two reasons which convince me that Lord Spencer is not dead,' said Mr. Rigby.

'I fear there is no doubt of it,' said the Duke, shaking his head.

'Lord Althorp was the only man who could keep them together,' said Lord Fitz-Booby.

'On the contrary,' said Tadpole. 'If I be right in my man, and I have no doubt of it, you will have a radical programme, and they will be stronger than ever.'

'Do you think they can get the steam up again?' said Taper, musingly.

'They will bid high,' replied Tadpole. 'Nothing could be more unfortunate than his death. Things were going on so well and so quietly! The Wesleyans almost with us!'

'And Shabbyton too!' mournfully exclaimed Taper. 'Another registration and quiet times, and I could have reduced the constituency to two hundred and fifty.'

'If Lord Spencer had died on the 10th,' said Rigby, 'it must have been known to Henry Rivers. And I

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have a letter from Henry Rivers by this post. Now, Althorp is in Northamptonshire, mark that, and Northampton is a county ——'

'My dear Rigby,' said the Duke, 'pardon me for interrupting you. Unhappily, there is no doubt Lord Spencer is dead, for I am one of his executors.'

This announcement silenced even Mr. Rigby, and the conversation now entirely merged in speculations on what would occur. Numerous were the conjectures hazarded, but the prevailing impression was, that this unforeseen event might embarrass those secret expectations of Court succour in which a certain section of the party had for some time reason to indulge.

From the moment, however, of the announcement of Lord Spencer's death, a change might be visibly observed in the tone of the party at Beaumanoir. They became silent, moody, and restless. There seemed a general, though not avowed, conviction that a crisis of some kind or other was at hand. The post, too, brought letters every day from town teeming with fanciful speculations, and occasionally mysterious hopes.

'I kept this cover for Peel,' said the Duke pensively, as he loaded his gun on the morning of the 14th. 'Do you know, I was always against his going to Rome.'

'It is very odd,' said Tadpole, 'but I was thinking of the very same thing.'

'It will be fifteen years before England will see a Tory Government,' said Mr. Rigby, drawing his ramrod, 'and then it will only last five months.'

'Melbourne, Althorp, and Durham, all in the Lords,' said Taper. 'Three leaders! They must quarrel.'

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'If Durham come in, mark me, he will dissolve on Household Suffrage and the Ballot,' said Tadpole.

'Not nearly so good a cry as Church,' replied Taper.

'With the Malt Tax,' said Tadpole. 'Church, without the Malt Tax, will not do against Household Suffrage and Ballot.'

'Malt Tax is madness,' said Taper. 'A good farmer's friend cry without Malt Tax would work just as well.'

'They will never dissolve,' said the Duke. 'They are so strong.'

'They cannot go on with three hundred majority,' said Taper. 'Forty is as much as can be managed with open constituencies.'

'If he had only gone to Paris instead of Rome!' said the Duke.

'Yes,' said Mr. Rigby, 'I could have written to him then by every post, and undeceived him as to his position.'

'After all, he is the only man,' said the Duke; 'and I really believe the country thinks so.'

'Pray, what is the country?' inquired Mr. Rigby. 'The country is nothing; it is the constituency you have to deal with.'

'And to manage them you must have had a good cry,' said Taper. 'All now depends upon a good cry.'

'So much for the science of politics,' said the Duke, bringing down a pheasant. 'How Peel would have enjoyed this cover!'

'He will have plenty of time for sport during his life,' said Mr. Rigby.

On the evening of the 15th of November, a despatch arrived at Beaumanoir, informing his Grace that

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the King had dismissed the Whig Ministry, and sent for the Duke of Wellington. Thus the first agitating suspense was over; to be succeeded, however, by expectation still more anxious. It was remarkable that every individual suddenly found that he had particular business in London which could not be neglected. The Duke very properly pleaded his executorial duties; but begged his guests on no account to be disturbed by his inevitable absence. Lord Fitz-Booby had just received a letter from his daughter, who was indisposed at Brighton, and he was most anxious to reach her. Tadpole had to receive deputations from Wesleyans, and well-registered boroughs anxious to receive well-principled candidates. Taper was off to get the first job at the contingent Treasury, in favour of the Borough of Shabbyton. Mr. Rigby alone was silent; but he quietly ordered a post-chaise at daybreak, and long before his fellow guests were roused from their slumbers, he was halfway to London, ready to give advice, either at the pavilion or at Apsley House.

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CHAPTER XV.

A Lively Season.

ALTHOUGH it is far from improbable that, had Sir Robert Peel been in England in the autumn of 1834, the Whig government would not have been dismissed; nevertheless, whatever may now be the opinion of the policy of that measure; whether it be looked on as a premature movement which necessarily led to the compact reorganisation of the Liberal party, or as a great stroke of State, which, by securing at all events a dissolution of the Parliament of 1832, restored the healthy balance of parties in the Legislature, questions into which we do not now wish to enter, it must be generally admitted that the conduct of every individual eminently concerned in that great historical transaction was characterised by the rarest and most admirable quality of public life, moral courage. The Sovereign who dismissed a Ministry apparently supported by an overwhelming majority in the Parliament and the nation, and called to his councils the absent chief of a parliamentary section, scarcely numbering at that moment one hundred and forty individuals, and of a party in the country supposed to be utterly discomfited by a recent revolution; the

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two ministers who in this absence provisionally administered the affairs of the kingdom in the teeth of an enraged and unscrupulous Opposition, and perhaps themselves not sustained by a profound conviction, that the arrival of their expected leader would convert their provisional into a permanent position; above all, the statesman who accepted the great charge at a time and under circumstances which marred probably the deep projects of his own prescient sagacity and maturing ambition — were all men gifted with a high spirit of enterprise, and animated by that active fortitude which is the soul of free governments.

It was a lively season, that winter of 1834! What hopes, what fears, and what bets! From the day on which Mr. Hudson was to arrive at Rome to the election of the Speaker, not a contingency that was not the subject of a wager! People sprang up like mushrooms; town suddenly became full. Everybody who had been in office, and everybody who wished to be in office; everybody who had ever had anything, and everybody who ever expected to have anything, were alike visible. All of course by mere accident; one might meet the same men regularly every day for a month, who were only 'passing through town.'

Now was the time for men to come forward who had never despaired of their country. True, they had voted for the Reform Bill, but that was to prevent a revolution. And now they were quite ready to vote against the Reform Bill, but this was to prevent a dissolution. These are the true patriots, whose confidence in the good sense of their countrymen and in their own selfishness is about equal. In the meantime, the hundred and forty threw a grim glance on

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the numerous waiters on Providence, and amiable trimmers, who affectionately enquired every day when news might be expected of Sir Robert. Though too weak to form a government, and having contributed in no wise by their exertions to the fall of the late one, the cohort of Parliamentary Tories felt all the alarm of men who have accidentally stumbled on some treasure-trove at the suspicious sympathy of new allies. But, after all, who were to form the government, and what was the government to be? Was it to be a Tory government, or an Enlightened-Spirit-of-the-Age Liberal-Moderate-Reform government; was it to be a government of high philosophy or of low practice; of principle or of expediency; of great measures or of little men? A government of statesmen or of clerks? Of Humbug or of Humdrum? Great questions these, but unfortunately there was nobody to answer them. They tried the Duke; but nothing could be pumped out of him. All that he knew, which he told in his curt, husky manner, was, that he had to carry on the King's government. As for his solitary colleague, he listened and smiled, and then in his musical voice asked them questions in return, which is the best possible mode of avoiding awkward inquiries. It was very unfair this; for no one knew what tone to take; whether they should go down to their public dinners and denounce the Reform Act or praise it; whether the Church was to be re-modelled or only admonished; whether Ireland was to be conquered or conciliated.

'This can't go on much longer,' said Taper to Tadpole, as they reviewed together their electioneering correspondence on the 1st of December; 'we have no cry.'

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'He is half way by this time,' said Tadpole; 'send an extract from a private letter to the *Standard*, dated Augsburg, and say he will be here in four days.'

At last he came; the great man in a great position, summoned from Rome to govern England. The very day that he arrived he had his audience with the King.

It was two days after this audience; the town, though November, in a state of excitement; clubs crowded, not only morning rooms, but halls and staircases swarming with members eager to give and to receive rumours equally vain; streets lined with cabs and chariots, grooms and horses; it was two days after this audience that Mr. Ormsby, celebrated for his political dinners, gave one to a numerous party. Indeed his saloons to-day, during the half-hour of gathering which precedes dinner, offered in the various groups, the anxious countenances, the inquiring voices, and the mysterious whispers, rather the character of an Exchange or Bourse than the tone of a festive society.

Here might be marked a murmuring knot of grey-headed privy-councillors, who had held fat offices under Perceval and Liverpool, and who looked back to the Reform Act as to a hideous dream; there some middle-aged aspirants might be observed who had lost their seats in the convulsion, but who flattered themselves they had done something for the party in the interval, by spending nothing except their breath in fighting hopeless boroughs, and occasionally publishing a pamphlet, which really produced less effect than chalking the walls. Light as air, and proud as a young peacock, tripped on his toes a young Tory,

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who had contrived to keep his seat in a Parliament where he had done nothing, but who thought an Under-Secretaryship was now secure, particularly as he was the son of a noble Lord who had also in a public capacity plundered and blundered in the good old time. The true political adventurer, who with dull desperation had stuck at nothing, had never neglected a treasury note, had been present at every division, never spoke when he was asked to be silent, and was always ready on any subject when they wanted him to open his mouth; who had treated his leaders with servility even behind their backs, and was happy for the day if a future Secretary of the Treasury bowed to him; who had not only discountenanced discontent in the party, but had regularly reported in strict confidence every instance of insubordination which came to his knowledge; might there too be detected under all the agonies of the crisis; just beginning to feel the dread misgiving, whether being a slave and a sneak were sufficient qualifications for office, without family or connection. Poor fellow! half the industry he had wasted on his cheerless craft might have made his fortune in some decent trade!

In dazzling contrast with these throes of low ambition, were some brilliant personages who had just scampered up from Melton, thinking it probable that Sir Robert might want some moral lords of the bedchamber. Whatever may have been their private fears or feelings, all however seemed smiling and significant, as if they knew something if they chose to tell it, and that something very much to their own satisfaction. The only grave countenance that was occasionally ushered into the room belonged to some

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individual whose destiny was not in doubt, and who was already practising the official air that was in future to repress the familiarity of his former fellow-strugglers.

'Do you hear anything?' said a great noble who wanted something in the general scramble, but what he knew not; only he had a vague feeling he ought to have something, having made such great sacrifices.

'There is a report that Clifford is to be Secretary to the Board of Control,' said Mr. Earwig, whose whole soul was in this subaltern arrangement of which the Minister of course had not even thought; 'but I cannot trace it to any authority.'

'I wonder who will be their Master of the Horse,' said the great noble, loving gossip though he despised the gossiper.

'Clifford has done nothing for the party,' said Mr. Earwig.

'I dare say Rambrooke will have the Buckhounds,' said the great noble, musingly.

'Your lordship has not heard Clifford's name mentioned?' continued Mr. Earwig.

'I should think they had not come to that sort of thing,' said the great noble, with ill-disguised contempt. 'The first thing after the Cabinet is formed is the Household: the things you talk of are done last;' and he turned upon his heel, and met the imperturbable countenance and clear sarcastic eye of Lord Eskdale.

'You have not heard anything?' asked the great noble of his brother patrician.

'Yes, a great deal since I have been in this room; but unfortunately it is all untrue.'

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'There is a report that Rambrooke is to have the Buckhounds; but I cannot trace it to any authority.'

'Pooh!' said Lord Eksdale.

'I don't see that Rambrooke should have the Buckhounds any more than anybody else. What sacrifices has he made?'

'Past sacrifices are nothing,' said Lord Eskdale. 'Present sacrifices are the thing we want: men who will sacrifice their principles, and join us.'

'You have not heard Rambrooke's name mentioned?'

'When a Minister has no Cabinet, and only one hundred and forty supporters in the House of Commons, he has something else to think of than places at Court,' said Lord Eskdale, as he slowly turned away to ask Lucian Gay whether it were true that Jenny Colon was coming over.

Shortly after this, Henry Sydney's father, who dined with Mr. Ormsby, drew Lord Eskdale into a window, and said in an undertone:

'So there is to be a kind of programme: something is to be written.'

'Well, we want a cue,' said Lord Eskdale. 'I heard of this last night: Rigby has written something.'

The Duke shook his head.

'No; Peel means to do it himself.'

But at this moment Mr. Ormsby begged his Grace to lead them to dinner.

'Something is to be written.' It is curious to recall the vague terms in which the first projection of documents that are to exercise a vast influence on the course of affairs or the minds of nations, is often mentioned. This 'something to be written' was

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written; and speedily; and has ever since been talked of.

We believe we may venture to assume that at no period during the movements of 1834–5 did Sir Robert Peel ever believe in the success of his administration. Its mere failure could occasion him little dissatisfaction; he was compensated for it by the noble opportunity afforded to him for the display of those great qualities, both moral and intellectual, which the swaddling-clothes of a routine prosperity had long repressed, but of which his opposition to the Reform Bill had given to the nation a significant intimation. The brief administration elevated him in public opinion, and even in the eye of Europe; and it is probable that a much longer term of power would not have contributed more to his fame.

The probable effect of the premature effort of his party on his future position as a Minister was, however, far from being so satisfactory. At the lowest ebb of his political fortunes, it cannot be doubted that Sir Robert Peel looked forward, perhaps through the vista of many years, to a period when the national mind, arrived by reflection and experience at certain conclusions, would seek in him a powerful expositor of its convictions. His time of life permitted him to be tranquil in adversity, and to profit by its salutary uses. He would then have acceded to power as the representative of a Creed, instead of being the leader of a Confederacy, and he would have been supported by earnest and enduring enthusiasm, instead of by that churlish sufferance which is the result of a supposed balance of advantages in his favour. This is the consequence of the tactics of those short-sighted intriguers, who

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persisted in looking upon a revolution as a mere party struggle, and would not permit the mind of the nation to work through the inevitable phases that awaited it. In 1834, England, though frightened at the reality of Reform, still adhered to its phrases; it was inclined, as practical England, to maintain existing institutions; but, as theoretical England, it was suspicious that they were indefensible.

No one had arisen either in Parliament, the Universities, or the Press, to lead the public mind to the investigation of principles; and not to mistake, in their reformations, the corruption of practice for fundamental ideas. It was this perplexed, ill-informed, jaded, shallow generation, repeating cries which they did not comprehend, and wearied with the endless ebullitions of their own barren conceit, that Sir Robert Peel was summoned to govern. It was from such materials, ample in quantity, but in all spiritual qualities most deficient; with great numbers, largely acred, Consol'd up to their chins, but without knowledge, genius, thought, truth, or faith, that Sir Robert Peel was to form a 'great Conservative party on a comprehensive basis.' That he did this like a dexterous politician, who can deny? Whether he realised those prescient views of a great statesman in which he had doubtless indulged, and in which, though still clogged by the leadership of 1834, he may yet find fame for himself and salvation for his country, is altogether another question. His difficult attempt was expressed in an address to his constituents, which now ranks among state papers. We shall attempt briefly to consider it with the impartiality of the future.

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CHAPTER XVI.

The Conservative Constitution.

THE TAMWORTH MANIFESTO of 1834 was an attempt to construct a party without principles; its basis therefore was necessarily Latitudinarianism; and its inevitable consequence has been Political Infidelity.

At an epoch of political perplexity and social alarm, the confederation was convenient, and was calculated by aggregation to encourage the timid and confused. But when the perturbation was a little subsided, and men began to inquire why they were banded together, the difficulty of defining their purpose proved that the league, however respectable, was not a party. The leaders indeed might profit by their eminent position to obtain power for their individual gratification, but it was impossible to secure their followers that which, after all, must be the great recompense of a political party, the putting in practice of their opinions; for they had none.

There was indeed a considerable shouting about what they called Conservative principles; but the awkward question naturally arose, What will you conserve? The prerogatives of the Crown, provided they

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are not exercised; the independence of the House of Lords, provided it is not asserted; the Ecclesiastical estate, provided it is regulated by a commission of laymen. Everything, in short, that is established, as long as it is a phrase and not a fact.

In the meantime, while forms and phrases are religiously cherished in order to make the semblance of a creed, the rule of practice is to bend to the passion or combination of the hour. Conservatism assumes in theory that everything established should be maintained; but adopts in practice that everything that is established is indefensible. To reconcile this theory and this practice, they produce what they call 'the best bargain;' some arrangement which has no principle and no purpose, except to obtain a temporary lull of agitation, until the mind of the Conservatives, without a guide and without an aim, distracted, tempted, and bewildered, is prepared for another arrangement, equally statesmanlike with the preceding one.

Conservatism was an attempt to carry on affairs by substituting the fulfilment of the duties of office for the performance of the functions of the government; and to maintain this negative system by the mere influence of property, reputable private conduct, and what are called good connections. Conservatism discards prescription, shrinks from principle, disavows progress; having rejected all respect for antiquity, it offers no redress for the present, and makes no preparation for the future. It is obvious that for a time, under favourable circumstances, such a confederation might succeed; but it is equally clear that on the arrival of one of those critical conjunctures that will periodically occur in all states, and which such an

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unimpassioned system is even calculated ultimately to create, all power of resistance will be wanting: the barren curse of political infidelity will paralyse all action; and the Conservative Constitution will be discovered to be a *Caput Mortuum.*

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CHAPTER XVII.

Tory Men and Whig Measures.

IN THE meantime, after dinner, Tadpole and Taper, who were among the guests of Mr. Ormsby, withdrew to a distant sofa, out of earshot, and indulged in confidential talk.

'Such a strength in debate was never before found on a Treasury bench,' said Mr. Tadpole; 'the other side will be dumbfounded.'

'And what do you put our numbers at now?' inquired Mr. Taper.

'Would you take fifty-five for our majority?' rejoined Mr. Tadpole.

'It is not so much the tail they have, as the excuse their junction will be for the moderate, sensible men to come over,' said Taper. 'Our friend Sir Everard for example, it would settle him.'

'He is a solemn imposter,' rejoined Mr. Tadpole; 'but he is a baronet and a county member, and very much looked up to by the Wesleyans. The other men, I know, have refused him a peerage.'

'And we might hold out judicious hopes,' said Taper.

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'No one can do that better than you,' said Tadpole. 'I am apt to say too much about those things.'

'I make it a rule never to open my mouth on such subjects,' said Taper. 'A nod or a wink will speak volumes. An affectionate pressure of the hand will sometimes do a great deal; and I have promised many a peerage without committing myself, by an ingenious habit of deference which cannot be mistaken by the future noble.'

'I wonder what they will do with Rigby,' said Tadpole.

'He wants a good deal,' said Taper.

'I tell you what, Mr. Taper, the time is gone by when a Marquess of Monmouth was Letter A, No. 1.'

'Very true, Mr. Tadpole. A wise man would do well now to look to the great middle class, as I said the other day to the electors of Shabbyton.'

'I had sooner be supported by the Wesleyans,' said Mr. Tadpole, 'than by all the marquesses in the peerage.'

'At the same time,' said Mr. Taper, 'Rigby is a considerable man. If we want a slashing article ——'

'Pooh!' said Mr. Tadpole. 'He is quite gone by. He takes three months for his slashing articles. Give me the man who can write a leader. Rigby can't write a leader.'

'Very few can,' said Mr. Taper. 'However, I don't think much of the press. Its power is gone by. They overdid it.'

'There is Tom Chudleigh,' said Tadpole. 'What is he to have?'

'Nothing, I hope,' said Taper. 'I hate him. A coxcomb! Cracking his jokes and laughing at us.'

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'He has done a good deal for the party, though,' said Tadpole. 'That, to be sure, is only an additional reason for throwing him over, as he is too far committed to venture to oppose us. But I am afraid from something that dropped to-day, that Sir Robert thinks he has claims.'

'We must stop them,' said Taper, growing pale. 'Fellows like Chudleigh, when they once get in, are always in one's way. I have no objection to young noblemen being put forward, for they are preferred so rapidly, and then their fathers die, that in the long run they do not practically interfere with us.'

'Well, his name was mentioned,' said Tadpole. 'There is no concealing that.'

'I will speak to Earwig,' said Taper. 'He shall just drop into Sir Robert's ear by chance that Chudleigh used to quiz him in the smoking-room. Those little bits of information do a great deal of good.'

'Well, I leave him to you,' said Tadpole. 'I am heartily with you in keeping out all fellows like Chudleigh. They are very well for opposition; but in office we don't want wits.'

'And when shall we have the answer from Knowsley?' inquired Taper. 'You anticipate no possible difficulty?'

'I tell you it is *carte blanche*,' replied Tadpole. 'Four places in the Cabinet. Two secretaryships at the least. Do you happen to know any gentleman of your acquaintance, Mr. Taper, who refuses Secretaryships of State so easily, that you can for an instant doubt of the present arrangement?'

'I know none indeed,' said Mr. Taper, with a grim smile.

'The thing is done,' said Mr. Tadpole.

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'And now for our cry,' said Mr. Taper.

'It is not a Cabinet for a good cry,' said Tadpole; 'but then, on the other hand, it is a Cabinet that will sow dissension in the opposite ranks, and prevent them having a good cry.'

'Ancient institutions and modern improvements, I suppose, Mr. Tadpole?'

'Ameliorations is the better word; ameliorations. Nobody knows exactly what it means.'

'We go strong on the Church?' said Mr. Taper.

'And no repeal of the Malt Tax; you were right, Taper. It can't be listened to for a moment.'

'Something might be done with prerogative,' said Mr. Taper; 'the King's constitutional choice.'

'Not too much,' replied Mr. Tadpole. 'It is a raw time yet for prerogative.'

'Ah! Tadpole,' said Mr. Taper, getting a little maudlin; 'I often think, if the time should ever come, when you and I should be joint Secretaries of the Treasury!'

'We shall see, we shall see. All we have to do is to get into Parliament, work well together, and keep other men down.'

'We will do our best,' said Taper. 'A dissolution you hold inevitable?'

'How are you and I to get into Parliament if there be not one? We must make it inevitable. I tell you what, Taper, the lists must prove a dissolution inevitable. You understand me? If the present Parliament goes on, where shall we be? We shall have new men cropping up every session.'

'True, terribly true,' said Mr. Taper. 'That we should ever live to see a Tory government again! We have reason to be very thankful.'

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'Hush!' said Mr. Tadpole. 'The time has gone by for Tory governments; what the country requires is a sound Conservative government.'

'A sound Conservative government,' said Taper, musingly. 'I understand: Tory men and Whig measures.'

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CHAPTER XVIII.

The Hero of Eton.

MID the contentions of party, the fierce struggles of ambition, and the intricacies of political intrigue, let us not forget our Eton friends. During the period which elapsed from the failure of the Duke of Wellington to form a government in 1832, to the failure of Sir Robert Peel to carry on a government in 1835, the boys had entered, and advanced in youth. The ties of friendship which then united several of them had only been confirmed by continued companionship. Coningsby and Henry Sydney, and Buckhurst and Vere, were still bound together by entire sympathy, and by the affection of which sympathy is the only sure spring. But their intimacies had been increased by another familiar friend. There had risen up between Coningsby and Millbank mutual sentiments of deep, and even ardent, regard. Acquaintance had developed the superior qualities of Millbank. His thoughtful and inquiring mind, his inflexible integrity, his stern independence, and yet the engaging union of extreme tenderness of heart with all this strength of character, had won the goodwill, and

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often excited the admiration, of Coningsby. Our hero, too, was gratified by the affectionate deference that was often shown to him by one who condescended to no other individual; he was proud of having saved the life of a member of their community whom masters and boys alike considered; and he ended by loving the being on whom he had conferred a great obligation.

The friends of Coningsby, the sweet-tempered and intelligent Henry Sydney, the fiery and generous Buckhurst, and the calm and sagacious Vere, had ever been favourably inclined to Millbank, and had they not been, the example of Coningsby would soon have influenced them. He had obtained over his intimates the ascendant power, which is the destiny of genius. Nor was the submission of such spirits to be held cheap. Although they were willing to take the colour of their minds from him, they were in intellect and attainments, in personal accomplishments and general character, the leaders of the school; an authority not to be won from five hundred high-spirited boys without the possession of great virtues and great talents.

As for the dominion of Coningsby himself, it was not limited to the immediate circle of his friends. He had become the hero of Eton; the being of whose existence everybody was proud, and in whose career every boy took an interest. They talked of him, they quoted him, they imitated him. Fame and power are the objects of all men. Even their partial fruition is gained by very few; and that too at the expense of social pleasure, health, conscience, life. Yet what power of manhood in passionate intenseness, appealing at the same time to the subject and

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the votary, can rival that which is exercised by the idolised chieftain of a great public school? What fame of after days equals the rapture of celebrity that thrills the youthful poet, as in tones of rare emotion he recites his triumphant verses amid the devoted plaudits of the flower of England? That's fame, that's power; real, unquestioned, undoubted, catholic. Alas! the schoolboy, when he becomes a man, finds that power, even fame, like everything else, is an affair of party.

Coningsby liked very much to talk politics with Millbank. He heard things from Millbank which were new to him. Himself, as he supposed, a high Tory, which he was according to the revelation of the Rigbys, he was also sufficiently familiar with the hereditary tenets of his Whig friend, Lord Vere. Politics had as yet appeared to him a struggle whether the country was to be governed by Whig nobles or Tory nobles; and he thought it very unfortunate that he should probably have to enter life with his friends out of power, and his family boroughs destroyed. But in conversing with Millbank, he heard for the first time of influential classes in the country, who were not noble, and were yet determined to acquire power. And although Millbank's views, which were of course merely caught up from his father, without the intervention of his own intelligence, were doubtless crude enough, and were often very acutely canvassed and satisfactorily demolished by the clever prejudices of another school, which Coningsby had at command, still they were, unconsciously to the recipient, materials for thought, and insensibly provoked in his mind a spirit of inquiry into political questions, for which he had a predisposition.

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It may be said, indeed, that generally among the upper boys there might be observed at this time, at Eton, a reigning inclination for political discussion. The school truly had at all times been proud of its statesmen and its parliamentary heroes, but this was merely a superficial feeling in comparison with the sentiment which now first became prevalent. The great public questions that were the consequence of the Reform of the House of Commons, had also agitated their young hearts. And especially the controversies that were now rife respecting the nature and character of ecclesiastical establishments, wonderfully addressed themselves to their excited intelligence. They read their newspapers with a keen relish, canvassed debates, and criticised speeches; and although in their debating society, which had been instituted more than a quarter of a century, discussion on topics of the day was prohibited, still by fixing on periods of our history when affairs were analogous to the present, many a youthful orator contrived very effectively to reply to Lord John, or to refute the fallacies of his rival.

As the political opinions predominant in the school were what in ordinary parlance are styled Tory, and indeed were far better entitled to that glorious epithet than the flimsy shifts which their fathers were professing in Parliament and the country; the formation and the fall of Sir Robert Peel's government had been watched by Etonians with great interest, and even excitement. The memorable efforts which the Minister himself made, supported only by the silent votes of his numerous adherents, and contending alone against the multiplied assaults of his able and determined foes, with a spirit equal to the great occasion, and with resources of parliamentary contest which

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seemed to increase with every exigency; these great and unsupported struggles alone were calculated to gain the sympathy of youthful and generous spirits. The assault on the revenues of the Church; the subsequent crusade against the House of Lords; the display of intellect and courage exhibited by Lord Lyndhurst in that assembly, when all seemed cowed and faint-hearted; all these were incidents or personal traits apt to stir the passions, and create in breasts not yet schooled to repress emotion a sentiment even of enthusiasm. It is the personal that interests mankind, that fires their imagination, and wins their hearts. A cause is a great abstraction, and fit only for students; embodied in a party, it stirs men to action; but place at the head of that party a leader who can inspire enthusiasm, he commands the world. Divine faculty! Rare and incomparable privilege! A parliamentary leader who possesses it, doubles his majority; and he who has it not may shroud himself in artificial reserve, and study with undignified arrogance an awkward haughtiness, but he will nevertheless be as far from controlling the spirit as from captivating the hearts of his sullen followers.

However, notwithstanding this general feeling at Eton, in 1835, in favour of 'Conservative principles,' which was, in fact, nothing more than a confused and mingled sympathy with some great political truths, which were at the bottom of every boy's heart, but nowhere else; and with the personal achievements and distinction of the chieftains of the party; when all this hubbub had subsided, and retrospection, in the course of a year, had exercised its moralising influence over the more thoughtful part of the nation, inquiries, at first faint and unpretending,

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and confined indeed for a long period to limited, though inquisitive, circles, began gently to circulate, what Conservative principles were.

These inquiries, urged indeed with a sort of hesitating scepticism, early reached Eton. They came, no doubt, from the Universities. They were of a character, however, far too subtle and refined to exercise any immediate influence over the minds of youth. To pursue them required previous knowledge and habitual thought. They were not yet publicly prosecuted by any school of politicians, or any section of the public press. They had not a local habitation or a name. They were whispered in conversation by a few. A tutor would speak of them in an esoteric vein to a favourite pupil, in whose abilities he had confidence, and whose future position in life would afford him the opportunity of influencing opinion. Among others they fell upon the ear of Coningsby. They were addressed to a mind which was prepared for such researches.

There is a Library at Eton formed by the boys and governed by the boys; one of those free institutions which are the just pride of that noble school, which shows the capacity of the boys for self-government, and which has sprung from the large freedom that has been wisely conceded them, the prudence of which confidence has been proved by their rarely abusing it. This Library has been formed by subscriptions of the present and still more by the gifts of old Etonians. Among the honoured names of these donors may be remarked those of the Grenvilles and Lord Wellesley; nor should we forget George IV., who enriched the collection with a magnificent copy of the Delphin Classics. The Institution is governed

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by six directors, the first three Collegers and the first three Oppidans for the time being; and the subscribers are limited to the one hundred senior members of the school.

It is only to be regretted that the collection is not so extensive as it is interesting and choice. Perhaps its existence is not so generally known as it deserves to be. One would think that every Eton man would be as proud of his name being registered as a donor in the Catalogue of this Library as a Venetian of his name being inscribed in the Golden Book. Indeed an old Etonian, who still remembers with tenderness the sacred scene of youth, could scarcely do better than build a Gothic apartment for the reception of the collection. It cannot be doubted that the Provost and fellows would be gratified in granting a piece of ground for the purpose.

Great were the obligations of Coningsby to this Eton Library. It introduced him to that historic lore, that accumulation of facts and incidents illustrative of political conduct, for which he had imbibed an early relish. His study was especially directed to the annals of his own country, in which youth, and not youth alone, is frequently so deficient. This collection could afford him Clarendon and Burnet, and the authentic volumes of Coxe: these were rich materials for one anxious to be versed in the great parliamentary story of his country. During the last year of his stay at Eton, when he had completed his eighteenth year, Coningsby led a more retired life than previously; he read much, and pondered with all the pride of acquisition over his increasing knowledge.

And now the hour has come when this youth is to be launched into a world more vast than that in

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which he has hitherto sojourned, yet for which this microcosm has been no ill preparation. He will become more wise; will he remain as generous? His ambition may be as great; will it be as noble? What, indeed, is to be the future of this existence that is now to be sent forth into the great aggregate of entities? Is it an ordinary organisation that will jostle among the crowd, and be jostled? Is it a finer temperament, susceptible of receiving the impressions and imbibing the inspirations of superior yet sympathising spirits? Or is it a primordial and creative mind; one that will say to his fellows, 'Behold, God has given me thought; I have discovered truth, and you shall believe'?

The night before Coningsby left Eton, alone in his room, before he retired to rest, he opened the lattice and looked for the last time upon the landscape before him; the stately keep of Windsor, the bowery meads of Eton, soft in the summer moon and still in the summer night. He gazed upon them; his countenance had none of the exultation that under such circumstances might have distinguished a more careless glance, eager for fancied emancipation and passionate for a novel existence. Its expression was serious, even sad; and he covered his brow with his hand.

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CHAPTER XIX.

An Interesting Stranger.

HERE are few things more full of delight and splendour than to travel during the heat of a refulgent summer in the green district of some ancient forest.

In one of our midland counties there is a region of this character, to which, during a season of peculiar lustre, we would introduce the reader.

It was a fragment of one of those vast sylvan tracts wherein Norman kings once hunted, and Saxon outlaws plundered; and although the plough had for centuries successfully invaded brake and bower, the relics retained all their original character of wildness and seclusion. Sometimes the green earth was thickly studded with groves of huge and vigorous oaks, intersected with those smooth and sunny glades that seem as if they must be cut for dames and knights to saunter on. Then again the undulating ground spread on all sides, far as the eye could range, covered with copse and fern of immense growth. Anon you found yourself in a turfy wilderness, girt in apparently by dark woods. And when

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you had wound your way a little through this gloomy belt, the landscape, still strictly sylvan, would beautifully expand with every combination and variety of woodland; while in its centre, the wild-fowl covered the waters of a lake, and the deer basked on the knolls that abounded on its banks.

It was in the month of August, some six or seven years ago, that a traveller on foot, touched, as he emerged from the dark wood, by the beauty of this scene, threw himself under the shade of a spreading tree, and stretched his limbs on the turf for enjoyment rather than repose. The sky was deep-coloured and without a cloud, save here and there a minute, sultry, burnished vapour, almost as glossy as the heavens. Everything was still as it was bright; all seemed brooding and basking; the bee upon its wing was the only stirring sight, and its song the only sound.

The traveller fell into a reverie. He was young, and therefore his musings were of the future. He had felt the pride of learning, so ennobling to youth; he was not a stranger to the stirring impulses of a high ambition, though the world to him was as yet only a world of books, and all that he knew of the schemes of statesmen and the passions of the people, were to be found in their annals. Often had his fitful fancy dwelt with fascination on visions of personal distinction, of future celebrity, perhaps even of enduring fame. But his dreams were of another colour now. The surrounding scene, so fair, so still, and sweet, so abstracted from all the tumult of the world, its strife, its passions, and its cares, had fallen on his heart with its soft and subduing spirit; had fallen on a heart still pure and innocent, the heart of one who,

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notwithstanding all his high resolves and daring thoughts, was blessed with that tenderness of soul which is sometimes linked with an ardent imagination and a strong will. The traveller was an orphan, more than that, a solitary orphan. The sweet sedulousness of a mother's love, a sister's mystical affection, had not cultivated his early susceptibility. No soft pathos of expression had appealed to his childish ear. He was alone, among strangers calmly and coldly kind. It must indeed have been a truly gentle disposition that could have withstood such hard neglect. All that he knew of the power of the softer passions might be found in the fanciful and romantic annals of schoolboy friendship.

And those friends too, so fond, so sympathising, so devoted, where were they now? Already they were dispersed; the first great separation of life had been experienced; the former schoolboy had planted his foot on the threshold of manhood. True, many of them might meet again; many of them the University must again unite, but never with the same feelings. The space of time, passed in the world before they again met, would be an age of sensation, passion, experience to all of them. They would meet again with altered mien, with different manners, different voices. Their eyes would not shine with the same light; they would not speak the same words. The favourite phrases of their intimacy, the mystic sounds that spoke only to their initiated ear, they would be ashamed to use them. Yes, they might meet again, but the gushing and secret tenderness was gone for ever?

Nor could our pensive youth conceal it from himself that it was affection, and mainly affection, that

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had bound him to these dear companions. They could not be to him what he had been to them. His had been the inspiring mind that had guided their opinions, formed their tastes, directed the bent and tenor of their lives and thoughts. Often, indeed, had he needed, sometimes he had even sighed for, the companionship of an equal or superior mind; one who, by the comprehension of his thought, and the richness of his knowledge, and the advantage of his experience, might strengthen and illuminate and guide his obscure or hesitating or unpractised intelligence. He had scarcely been fortunate in this respect, and he deeply regretted it; for he was one of those who was not content with excelling in his own circle, if he thought there was one superior to it. Absolute, not relative distinction, was his noble aim.

Alone, in a lonely scene, he doubly felt the solitude of his life and mind. His heart and his intellect seemed both to need a companion. Books, and action, and deep thought, might in time supply the want of that intellectual guide; but for the heart, where was he to find solace?

Ah! if she would but come forth from that shining lake like a beautiful Ondine! Ah, if she would but step out from the green shade of that secret grove like a Dryad of sylvan Greece! O mystery of mysteries, when the youth dreams his first dream over some imaginary heroine!

Suddenly the brooding wild-fowl rose from the bosom of the lake, soared in the air, and, uttering mournful shrieks, whirled in agitated tumult. The deer started from their knolls, no longer sunny, stared around, and rushed into the woods. Coningsby raised his eyes from the turf on which they had been long

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fixed in abstraction, and he observed that the azure sky had vanished, a thin white film had suddenly spread itself over the heavens, and the wind moaned with a sad and fitful gust.

He had some reason to believe that on the other side of the opposite wood the forest was intersected by a public road, and that there were some habitations. Immediately rising, he descended at a rapid pace into the valley, passed the lake, and then struck into the ascending wood on the bank opposite to that on which he had mused away some precious time.

The wind howled, the branches of the forest stirred, and sent forth sounds like an incantation. Soon might be distinguished the various voices of the mighty trees, as they expressed their terror or their agony. The oak roared, the beech shrieked, the elm sent forth its deep and long-drawn groan; while ever and anon, amid a momentary pause, the passion of the ash was heard in moans of thrilling anguish.

Coningsby hurried on, the forest became less close. All that he aspired to was to gain more open country. Now he was in a rough flat land, covered only here and there with dwarf underwood; the horizon bounded at no great distance by a barren hill of moderate elevation. He gained its height with ease. He looked over a vast open country like a wild common; in the extreme distance hills covered with woods; the plain intersected by two good roads: the sky entirely clouded, but in the distance black as ebony.

A place of refuge was at hand: screened from his first glance by some elm-trees, the ascending smoke now betrayed a roof, which Coningsby reached before the tempest broke. The forest-inn was also a farm-house. There was a comfortable enough looking

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kitchen; but the ingle nook was full of smokers, and Coningsby was glad to avail himself of the only private room for the simple meal which they offered him — only eggs and bacon, but very welcome to a pedestrian, and a hungry one.

As he stood at the window of his little apartment, watching the large drops that were the heralds of a coming hurricane, and waiting for his repast, a flash of lightning illumined the whole country, and a horseman at full speed, followed by his groom, galloped up to the door.

The remarkable beauty of the animal so attracted Coningsby's attention, that it prevented him catching even a glimpse of the rider, who rapidly dismounted and entered the inn. The host shortly after came in and asked Coningsby whether he had any objection to a gentleman, who was driven there by the storm, sharing his room until it subsided. The consequence of the immediate assent of Coningsby was that the landlord retired and soon returned, ushering in an individual, who, though perhaps ten years older than Coningsby, was still, according to Hippocrates, in the period of lusty youth. He was above the middle height, and of a distinguished air and figure; pale, with an impressive brow, and dark eyes of great intelligence.

'I am glad that we have both escaped the storm,' said the stranger; 'and I am greatly indebted to you for your courtesy.' He slightly and graciously bowed, as he spoke in a voice of remarkable clearness; and his manner, though easy, was touched with a degree of dignity that was engaging.

'The inn is a common home,' replied Coningsby, returning his salute.

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'And free from cares,' added the stranger. Then, looking through the window, he said, 'A strange storm this. I was sauntering in the sunshine, when suddenly I found I had to gallop for my life. 'Tis more like a white squall in the Mediterranean than anything else.'

'I never was in the Mediterranean,' said Coningsby. 'There is nothing I should like so much as to travel.'

'You are travelling,' rejoined his companion. 'Every moment is travel, if understood.'

'Ah! but the Mediterranean!' exclaimed Coningsby. 'What would I not give to see Athens!'

'I have seen it,' said the stranger, slightly shrugging his shoulders; 'and more wonderful things. Phantoms and spectres! The Age of Ruins is past. Have you seen Manchester?'

'I have seen nothing,' said Coningsby; 'this is my first wandering. I am about to visit a friend who lives in this county, and I have sent on my baggage as I could. For myself, I determined to trust to a less commonplace conveyance.'

'And seek adventures,' said the stranger, smiling. 'Well, according to Cervantes, they should begin in an inn.'

'I fear that the age of adventures is past, as well as that of ruins,' replied Coningsby.

'Adventures are to the adventurous,' said the stranger.

At this moment a pretty serving-maid entered the room. She laid the dapper cloth and arranged the table with a self-possession quite admirable. She seemed unconscious that any being was in the chamber except herself, or that there were any other duties to

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perform in life beyond filling a salt-cellar or folding a napkin.

'She does not even look at us,' said Coningsby, when she had quitted the room; 'and I dare say is only a prude.'

'She is calm,' said the stranger, 'because she is mistress of her subject; 'tis the secret of self-possession. She is here as a duchess at court.'

They brought in Coningsby's meal, and he invited the stranger to join him. The invitation was accepted with cheerfulness.

''Tis but simple fare,' said Coningsby, as the maiden uncovered the still hissing bacon and the eggs, that looked like tufts of primroses.

'Nay, a national dish,' said the stranger, glancing quickly at the table, 'whose fame is a proverb. And what more should we expect under a simple roof! How much better than an omelette or a greasy olla, that they would give us in a posada! 'Tis a wonderful country this England! What a napkin! How spotless! And so sweet; I declare 'tis a perfume. There is not a princess throughout the South of Europe served with the cleanliness that meets us in this cottage.'

'An inheritance from our Saxon fathers?' said Coningsby. 'I apprehend the northern nations have a greater sense of cleanliness, of propriety, of what we call comfort?'

'By no means,' said the stranger; 'the East is the land of the bath. Moses and Mahomet made cleanliness religion.'

'You will let me help you?' said Coningsby, offering him a plate which he had filled.

'I thank you,' said the stranger, 'but it is one of my bread days. With your permission, this shall

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be my dish;' and he cut from the large loaf a supply of crusts.

''Tis but unsavoury fare after a gallop,' said Coningsby.

'Ah! you are proud of your bacon and your eggs,' said the stranger, smiling, 'but I love corn and wine. They are our chief and our oldest luxuries. Time has brought us substitutes, but how inferior! Man has defied corn and wine! but not even the Chinese or the Irish have raised temples to tea and potatoes.'

'But Ceres without Bacchus,' said Coningsby, 'how does that do? Think you, under this roof, we could invoke the god?'

'Let us swear by his body that we will try,' said the stranger.

Alas! the landlord was not a priest to Bacchus. But then these inquiries led to the finest perry in the world. The young men agreed that they had seldom tasted anything more delicious; they sent for another bottle. Coningsby, who was much interested by his new companion, enjoyed himself amazingly.

A cheese, such as Derby alone can produce, could not induce the stranger to be even partially inconstant to his crusts. But his talk was as vivacious as if the talker had been stimulated by the juices of the finest banquet. Coningsby had never met or read of any one like this chance companion. His sentences were so short, his language so racy, his voice rang so clear, his elocution was so complete. On all subjects his mind seemed to be instructed, and his opinions formed. He flung out a result in a few words; he solved with a phrase some deep problem that men muse over for years. He said many things that were strange, yet they immediately appeared to be true.

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Then, without the slightest air of pretension or parade, he seemed to know everybody as well as everything. Monarchs, statesmen, authors, adventurers, of all descriptions and of all climes, if their names occurred in the conversation, he described them in an epigrammatic sentence, or revealed their precise position, character, calibre, by a curt dramatic trait. All this, too, without any excitement of manner; on the contrary, with repose amounting almost to nonchalance. If his address had any fault in it, it was rather a deficiency of earnestness. A slight spirit of mockery played over his speech even when you deemed him most serious; you were startled by his sudden transitions from profound thought to poignant sarcasm. A very singular freedom from passion and prejudice on every topic on which they treated, might be some compensation for this want of earnestness, perhaps was its consequence. Certainly it was difficult to ascertain his precise opinions on many subjects, though his manner was frank even to abandonment. And yet throughout his whole conversation, not a stroke of egotism, not a word, not a circumstance escaped him, by which you could judge of his position or purposes in life. As little did he seem to care to discover those of his companion. He did not by any means monopolise the conversation. Far from it; he continually asked questions, and while he received answers, or had engaged his fellow-traveller in any exposition of his opinion or feelings, he listened with a serious and fixed attention, looking Coningsby in the face with a steadfast glance.

'I perceive,' said Coningsby, pursuing a strain of thought which the other had indicated, 'that you have great confidence in the influence of individual

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character. I also have some confused persuasions of that kind. But it is not the Spirit of the Age.'

'The age does not believe in great men, because it does not possess any,' replied the stranger. 'The Spirit of the Age is the very thing that a great man changes.'

'But does he not rather avail himself of it?' inquired Coningsby.

'Parvenus do,' rejoined his companion; 'but not prophets, great legislators, great conquerors. They destroy and they create.'

'But are these times for great legislators and great conquerors?' urged Coningsby.

'When were they wanted more?' asked the stranger. 'From the throne to the hovel all call for a guide. You give monarchs constitutions to teach them sovereignty, and nations Sunday-schools to inspire them with faith.'

'But what is an individual,' exclaimed Coningsby, 'against a vast public opinion?'

'Divine,' said the stranger. 'God made man in His own image; but the Public is made by Newspapers, Members of Parliament, Excise Officers, Poor Law Guardians. Would Philip have succeeded if Epaminondas had not been slain? And if Philip had not succeeded? Would Prussia have existed had Frederick not been born? And if Frederick had not been born? What would have been the fate of the Stuarts if Prince Henry had not died, and Charles I., as was intended, had been Archbishop of Canterbury?'

'But when men are young they want experience,' said Coningsby; 'and when they have gained experience, they want energy.'

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'Great men never want experience,' said the stranger.

'But everybody says that experience——'

'Is the best thing in the world, a treasure for you, for me, for millions. But for a creative mind, less than nothing. Almost everything that is great has been done by youth.'

'It is at least a creed flattering to our years,' said Coningsby, with a smile.

'Nay,' said the stranger; 'for life in general there is but one decree. Youth is a blunder; Manhood a struggle; Old Age a regret. Do not suppose,' he added, smiling, 'that I hold that youth is genius; all that I say is, that genius, when young, is divine. Why, the greatest captains of ancient and modern times both conquered Italy at five-and-twenty! Youth, extreme youth, overthrew the Persian Empire. Don John of Austria won Lepanto at twenty-five, the greatest battle of modern times; had it not been for the jealousy of Philip, the next year he would have been Emperor of Mauritania. Gaston de Foix was only twenty-two when he stood a victor on the plain of Ravenna. Every one remembers Condé and Rocroy at the same age. Gustavus Adolphus died at thirty-eight. Look at his captains: that wonderful Duke of Weimar, only thirty-six when he died. Banier himself, after all his miracles, died at forty-five. Cortes was little more than thirty when he gazed upon the golden cupolas of Mexico. When Maurice of Saxony died at thirty-two, all Europe acknowledged the loss of the greatest captain and the profoundest statesman of the age. Then there is Nelson, Clive; but these are warriors, and perhaps you may think there are greater things than war. I

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do not: I worship the Lord of Hosts. But take the most illustrious achievements of civil prudence. Innocent III., the greatest of the Popes, was the despot of Christendom at thirty-seven. John de Medici was a Cardinal at fifteen, and according to Guicciardini, baffled with his statecraft Ferdinand of Arragon himself. He was Pope, as Leo X., at thirty-seven. Luther robbed even him of his richest province at thirty-five. Take Ignatius Loyola and John Wesley, they worked with young brains. Ignatius was only thirty when he made his pilgrimage and wrote the "Spiritual Exercises." Pascal wrote a great work at sixteen, and died at thirty-seven, the greatest of Frenchmen.

'Ah! that fatal thirty-seven, which reminds me of Byron, greater even as a man than a writer. Was it experience that guided the pencil of Raphael when he painted the palaces of Rome? He, too, died at thirty-seven. Richelieu was Secretary of State at thirty-one. Well, then, there were Bolingbroke and Pitt, both ministers before other men left off cricket. Grotius was in great practice at seventeen, and Attorney-General at twenty-four. And Acquaviva; Acquaviva was General of the Jesuits, ruled every cabinet in Europe, and colonised America before he was thirty-seven. What a career!' exclaimed the stranger; rising from his chair and walking up and down the room; 'the secret sway of Europe! That was indeed a position! But it is needless to multiply instances! The history of Heroes is the history of Youth.'

'Ah!' said Coningsby, 'I should like to be a great man.'

The stranger threw at him a scrutinising glance. His countenance was serious. He said in a voice of almost solemn melody,

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'Nurture your mind with great thoughts. To believe in the heroic makes heroes.'

'You seem to me a hero,' said Coningsby, in a tone of real feeling, which, half ashamed of his emotion, he tried to turn into playfulness.

'I am and must ever be,' said the stranger, 'but a dreamer of dreams.' Then going towards the window, and changing into a familiar tone, as if to divert the conversation, he added, 'What a delicious afternoon! I look forward to my ride with delight. You rest here?'

'No; I go on to Nottingham, where I shall sleep.'

'And I in the opposite direction.' And he rang the bell, and ordered his horses.

'I long to see your mare again,' said Coningsby. 'She seemed to me so beautiful.'

'She is not only of pure race,' said the stranger, 'but of the highest and rarest breed in Arabia. Her name is "the Daughter of the Star." She is a foal of that famous mare which belonged to the Prince of the Wahabees; and to possess which, I believe, was one of the principal causes of war between that tribe and the Egyptians. The Pasha of Egypt gave her to me, and I would not change her for her statue in pure gold, even carved by Lysippus. Come round to the stable and see her.'

They went out together. It was a soft sunny afternoon; the air fresh from the rain, but mild and exhilarating.

The groom brought forth the mare. 'The Daughter of the Star' stood before Coningsby with her sinewy shape of matchless symmetry; her burnished skin, black mane, legs like those of an antelope, her little ears, dark speaking eye, and tail worthy of a

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Pasha. And who was her master, and whither was she about to take him?

Coningsby was so naturally well-bred that we may be sure it was not curiosity—no, it was a finer feeling—that made him hesitate and think a little, and then say:

'I am sorry to part.'

'I also,' said the stranger. 'But life is constant separation.'

'I hope we may meet again,' said Coningsby.

'If our acquaintance be worth preserving,' said the stranger, 'you may be sure it will not be lost.'

'But mine is not worth preserving,' said Coningsby, earnestly. 'It is yours that is the treasure. You teach me things of which I have long mused.'

The stranger took the bridle of 'the Daughter of the Star,' and turning round with a faint smile, extended his hand to his companion.

'Your mind at least is nurtured with great thoughts,' said Coningsby; 'your actions should be heroic.'

'Action is not for me,' said the stranger; 'I am of that faith that the Apostles professed before they followed their master.'

He vaulted into his saddle, 'the Daughter of the Star' bounded away as if she scented the air of the Desert from which she and her rider had alike sprung, and Coningsby remained in profound meditation.

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CHAPTER XX.

Description of a Coquette.

THE day after his adventure at the Forest Inn, Coningsby arrived at Beaumanoir. It was several years since he had visited the family of his friend, who were indeed also his kin; and in his boyish days had often proved that they were not unmindful of the affinity. This was a visit that had been long counted on, long promised, and which a variety of circumstances had hitherto prevented. It was to have been made by the schoolboy; it was to be fulfilled by the man. For no less a character could Coningsby under any circumstances now consent to claim, since he was closely verging to the completion of his nineteenth year; and it appeared manifest that if it were his destiny to do anything great, he had but few years to wait before the full development of his power. Visions of Gastons de Foix and Maurices of Saxony, statesmen giving up cricket to govern nations, beardless Jesuits plunged in profound abstraction in omnipotent cabinets, haunted his fancy from the moment he had separated from his mysterious and deeply interesting companion. To nurture his

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mind with great thoughts had ever been Coningsby's inspiring habit. Was it also destined that he should achieve the heroic?

There are some books—one or two in the course of our life—which, after we close them, difficult as it may be to analyse or ascertain the cause, enable our minds to make a great leap. A thousand obscure things receive light; a multitude of indefinite feelings are determined. Our intellect grasps and grapples with all subjects with a capacity, a flexibility, and a vigour, before unknown to us. It masters questions hitherto perplexing, which are not even touched or referred to in the volume just closed. What is this magic? It is the spirit of the supreme author, by a magnetic influence blending with our sympathising intelligence, that directs and inspires it. By that mysterious sensibility we extend to questions which he has not treated, the same intellectual force which he has exercised over those which he has expounded. His genius for a time remains in us. 'Tis the same with human beings as with books. All of us encounter, at least once in our life, some individual who utters words that make us think for ever. There are men whose phrases are oracles; who condense in a sentence the secrets of life; who blurt out an aphorism that forms a character or illustrates an existence. A great thing is a great book; but greater than all is the talk of a great man.

And what is a great man? Is it a Minister of State? Is it a victorious General? A gentleman in the Windsor uniform? A Field Marshal covered with stars? Is it a Prelate, or a Prince? A King, even an Emperor? It may be all these; yet these, as we must all daily feel, are not necessarily great

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men. A great man is one who affects the mind of his generation: whether he be a monk in his cloister agitating Christendom, or a monarch crossing the Granicus, and giving a new character to the Pagan world.

Our young Coningsby reached Beaumanoir in a state of meditation. He also desired to be great. Not from the restless vanity that sometimes impels youth to momentary exertion, by which they sometimes obtain a distinction as evanescent as their energy. The ambition of our hero was altogether of a different character. It was, indeed, at present not a little vague, indefinite, hesitating, inquiring, sometimes desponding. What were his powers? what should be his aim? were often to him, as to all young aspirants, questions infinitely perplexing and full of pain. But, on the whole, there ran through his character, notwithstanding his many dazzling qualities and accomplishments, and his juvenile celebrity, which has spoiled so much promise, a vein of grave simplicity that was the consequence of an earnest temper, and of an intellect that would be content with nothing short of the profound.

His was a mind that loved to pursue every question to the centre. But it was not a spirit of scepticism that impelled this habit; on the contrary, it was the spirit of faith. Coningsby found that he was born in an age of infidelity in all things, and his heart assured him that a want of faith was a want of nature. But his vigorous intellect could not take refuge in that maudlin substitute for belief which consists in a patronage of fantastic theories. He needed that deep and enduring conviction which the heart and the intellect, feeling and reason united, can alone supply. He

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asked himself why governments were hated, and religions despised? Why loyalty was dead, and reverence only a galvanised corpse?

These were, indeed, questions that had as yet presented themselves to his thought in a crude and imperfect form; but their very occurrence showed the strong predisposition of his mind. It was because he had not found guides among his elders, that his thoughts had been turned to the generation that he himself represented. The sentiment of veneration was so developed in his nature that he was exactly the youth that would have hung with enthusiastic humility on the accents of some sage of old in the groves of Academus or on the porch of Zeno. But as yet he had found age only perplexed and desponding; manhood only callous and desperate. Some thought that systems would last their time; others, that something would turn up. His deep and pious spirit recoiled with disgust and horror from such lax, chance-medley maxims, that would, in their consequences, reduce man to the level of the brutes. Notwithstanding a prejudice which had haunted him from his childhood, he had, when the occasion offered, applied to Mr. Rigby for instruction, as one distinguished in the republic of letters, as well as the realm of politics — who assumed the guidance of the public mind, and, as the phrase runs, was looked up to. Mr. Rigby listened at first to the inquiries of Coningsby, urged, as they ever were, with a modesty and deference which do not always characterise juvenile investigations, as if Coningsby were speaking to him of the unknown tongues. But Mr. Rigby was not a man who ever confessed himself at fault. He caught up something of the subject as our young friend proceeded, and

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was perfectly prepared, long before he had finished, to take the whole conversation into his own hands.

Mr. Rigby began by ascribing everything to the Reform Bill, and then referred to several of his own speeches on Schedule A. Then he told Coningsby that want of religious faith was solely occasioned by want of churches; and want of loyalty, by George IV. having shut himself up too much at the cottage in Windsor Park, entirely against the advice of Mr. Rigby. He assured Coningsby that the Church Commission was operating wonders, and that, with private benevolence — he had himself subscribed 1,000*l.*, for Lord Monmouth — we should soon have churches enough. The great question now was their architecture. Had George IV. lived all would have been right. They would have been built on the model of the Buddhist pagoda. As for loyalty, if the present King went regularly to Ascot races, he had no doubt all would go right. Finally, Mr. Rigby impressed on Coningsby to read the *Quarterly Review* with great attention; and to make himself master of Mr. Wordy's *History of the Late War*, in twenty volumes, a capital work, which proves that Providence was on the side of the Tories.

Coningsby did not apply to Mr. Rigby again; but worked on with his own mind, coming often enough to sufficiently crude conclusions, and often much perplexed and harassed. He tried occasionally his inferences on his companions, who were intelligent and full of fervour. Millbank was more than this. He was of a thoughtful mood; had also caught up from a new school some principles, which were materials for discussion. One way or other, however, before he quitted Eton there prevailed among this circle of

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friends, the initial idea doubtless emanating from Coningsby, an earnest, though a rather vague, conviction that the present state of feeling in matters both civil and religious was not healthy; that there must be substituted for this latitudinarianism something sound and deep, fervent and well defined, and that the priests of this new faith must be found among the New Generation; so that when the bright-minded rider of 'the Daughter of the Star' descanted on the influence of individual character, of great thoughts and heroic actions, and the divine power of youth and genius, he touched a string that was the very heart-chord of his companion, who listened with fascinated enthusiasm as he introduced him to his gallery of inspiring models.

Coningsby arrived at Beaumanoir at a season when men can neither hunt nor shoot. Great internal resources should be found in a country family under such circumstances. The Duke and Duchess had returned from London only a few days with their daughter, who had been presented this year. They were all glad to find themselves again in the country, which they loved and which loved them. One of their sons-in-law and his wife, and Henry Sydney, completed the party.

There are few conjunctures in life of a more startling interest, than to meet the pretty little girl that we have gambolled with in our boyhood, and to find her changed in the lapse of a very few years, which in some instances may not have brought a corresponding alteration in our own appearance, into a beautiful woman. Something of this flitted over Coningsby's mind, as he bowed, a little agitated from his surprise, to Lady Theresa Sydney. All that he re-

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membered had prepared him for beauty; but not for the degree or character of beauty that he met. It was a rich, sweet face, with blue eyes and dark lashes, and a nose that we have no epithet in English to describe, but which charmed in Roxalana. Her brown hair fell over her white and well-turned shoulders in long and luxuriant tresses. One has met something as brilliant and dainty in a medallion of old Sèvres, or amid the terraces and gardens of Watteau.

Perhaps Lady Theresa, too, might have welcomed him with more freedom had his appearance also more accorded with the image which he had left behind. Coningsby was a boy then, as we described him in our first chapter. Though only nineteen now, he had attained his full stature, which was above the middle height, and time had fulfilled that promise of symmetry in his figure, and grace in his mien, then so largely intimated. Time, too, which had not yet robbed his countenance of any of its physical beauty, had strongly developed the intellectual charm by which it had ever been distinguished. As he bowed lowly before the Duchess and her daughter, it would have been difficult to image a youth of a mien more prepossessing and a manner more finished.

A manner that was spontaneous; nature's pure gift, the reflex of his feeling. No artifice prompted that profound and polished homage. Not one of those influences, the aggregate of whose sway produces, as they tell us, the finished gentleman, had ever exercised its beneficent power on our orphan, and not rarely forlorn, Coningsby. No clever and refined woman, with her quick perception, and nice criticism that never offends our self-love, had ever given him

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that education that is more precious than Universities. The mild suggestions of a sister, the gentle raillery of some laughing cousin, are also advantages not always appreciated at the time, but which boys, when they have become men, often think over with gratitude, and a little remorse at the ungracious spirit in which they were received. Not even the dancing-master had afforded his mechanical aid to Coningsby, who, like all Eton boys of this generation, viewed that professor of accomplishments with frank repugnance. But even in the boisterous life of school, Coningsby, though his style was free and flowing, was always well-bred. His spirit recoiled from that gross familiarity that is the characteristic of modern manners, and which would destroy all forms and ceremonies merely because they curb and control their own coarse convenience and ill-disguised selfishness. To women, however, Coningsby instinctively bowed, as to beings set apart for reverence and delicate treatment. Little as his experience was of them, his spirit had been fed with chivalrous fancies, and he entertained for them all the ideal devotion of a Surrey or a Sidney. Instructed, if not learned, as books and thought had already made him in men, he could not conceive that there were any other women in the world than fair Geraldines and Countesses of Pembroke.

There was not a country-house in England that had so completely the air of habitual residence as Beaumanoir. It is a charming trait, and very rare. In many great mansions everything is as stiff, formal, and tedious, as if your host were a Spanish grandee in the days of the Inquisition. No ease, no resources; the passing life seems a solemn spectacle in which

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you play a part. How delightful was the morning room at Beaumanoir, from which gentlemen were not excluded with that assumed suspicion that they can never enter it but for felonious purposes. Such a profusion of flowers! Such a multitude of books! Such a various prodigality of writing materials! So many easy chairs too, of so many shapes; each in itself a comfortable home; yet nothing crowded. Woman alone can organise a drawing-room; man succeeds sometimes in a library. And the ladies' work! How graceful they look bending over their embroidery frames, consulting over the arrangement of a group, or the colour of a flower. The panniers and fanciful baskets, overflowing with variegated worsted, are gay and full of pleasure to the eye, and give an air of elegant business that is vivifying. Even the sight of employment interests.

Then the morning costume of English women is itself a beautiful work of art. At this period of the day they can find no rivals in other climes. The brilliant complexions of the daughters of the north dazzle in daylight; the illumined saloon levels all distinctions. One should see them in their well-fashioned muslin dresses. What matrons, and what maidens! Full of graceful dignity, fresher than the morn! And the married beauty in her little lace cap. Ah, she is a coquette! A charming character at all times; in a country-house an invaluable one.

A coquette is a being who wishes to please. Amiable being! If you do not like her, you will have no difficulty in finding a female companion of a different mood. Alas! coquettes are but too rare. 'Tis a career that requires great abilities, infinite pains, a gay and airy spirit. 'Tis the coquette that provides

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all amusement, suggests the riding party, plans the pic-nic, gives and guesses charades, acts them. She is the stirring element amid the heavy congeries of social atoms; the soul of the house, the salt of the banquet. Let any one pass a very agreeable week, or it may be ten days, under any roof, and analyse the cause of his satisfaction, and one might safely make a gentle wager that his solution would present him with the frolic phantom of a coquette.

'It is impossible that Mr. Coningsby can remember me!' said a clear voice; and he looked round, and was greeted by a pair of sparkling eyes and the gayest smile in the world.

It was Lady Everingham, the Duke's married daughter.

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CHAPTER XXI.

Boyish Friendship Renewed.

'AND you walked here!' said Lady Everingham to Coningsby, when the stir of arranging themselves at dinner had subsided. 'Only think, papa, Mr. Coningsby walked here! I also am a great walker.'

'I had heard much of the forest,' said Coningsby.

'Which I am sure did not disappoint you,' said the Duke.

'But forests without adventures!' said Lady Everingham, a little shrugging her pretty shoulders.

'But I had an adventure,' said Coningsby.

'Oh! tell it us by all means!' said the Lady, with great animation. 'Adventures are my weakness. I have had more adventures than any one. Have I not had, Augustus?' she added, addressing her husband.

'But you make everything out to be an adventure, Isabel,' said Lord Everingham. 'I dare say that Mr. Coningsby's was more substantial.' And looking at our young friend, he invited him to inform them.

'I met a most extraordinary man,' said Coningsby.

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'It should have been a heroine,' exclaimed Lady Everingham.

'Do you know anybody in this neighbourhood who rides the finest Arab in the world?' asked Coningsby. 'She is called "the Daughter of the Star," and was given to her rider by the Pasha of Egypt.'

'This is really an adventure,' said Lady Everingham, interested.

'The Daughter of the Star!' said Lady Theresa. 'What a pretty name! Percy has a horse called "Sunbeam."'

'A fine Arab, the finest in the world!' said the Duke, who was very fond of horses. 'Who can it be?'

'Can you throw any light on this, Mr. Lyle?' asked the Duchess of a young man who sat next her.

He was a neighbour who had joined their dinner-party. Eustace Lyle, a Roman Catholic, and the richest commoner in the county; for he had succeeded to a great estate early in his minority, which had only this year terminated.

'I certainly do not know the horse,' said Mr. Lyle; 'but if Mr. Coningsby would describe the rider, perhaps——'

'He is a man something under thirty,' said Coningsby, 'pale, with dark hair. We met in a sort of forest-inn during a storm. A most singular man! Indeed, I never met any one who seemed to me so clever, or to say such remarkable things.'

'He must have been the spirit of the storm,' said Lady Everingham.

'Charles Verney has a great deal of dark hair,' said Lady Theresa. 'But then he is anything but pale, and his eyes are blue.'

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'And certainly he keeps his wonderful things for your ear, Theresa,' said her sister.

'I wish that Mr. Coningsby would tell us some of the wonderful things he said,' said the Duchess, smiling.

'Take a glass of wine first with my mother, Coningsby,' said Henry Sydney, who had just finished helping them all to fish.

Coningsby had too much tact to be entrapped into a long story. He already regretted that he had been betrayed into any allusion to the stranger. He had a wild, fanciful notion that their meeting ought to have been preserved as a sacred secret. But he had been impelled to refer to it in the first instance by the chance observation of Lady Everingham; and he had pursued his remark from the hope that the conversation might have led to the discovery of the unknown. When he found that his inquiry in this respect was unsuccessful, he was willing to turn the conversation. In reply to the Duchess, then, he generally described the talk of the stranger as full of lively anecdote and epigrammatic views of life; and gave them, for example, a saying of an illustrious foreign Prince, which was quite new and pointed, and which Coningsby told well. This led to a new train of discourse. The Duke also knew this illustrious foreign Prince, and told another story of him; and Lord Everingham had played whist with this illustrious foreign Prince often at the Travellers', and this led to a third story; none of them too long. Then Lady Everingham came in again, and sparkled agreeably. She, indeed, sustained throughout dinner the principal weight of the conversation; but, as she asked questions of everybody, all seemed to contribute. Even

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the voice of Mr. Lyle, who was rather bashful, was occasionally heard in reply. Coningsby, who had at first unintentionally taken a more leading part than he aspired to, would have retired into the background for the rest of the dinner, but Lady Everingham continually signalled him out for her questions, and as she sat opposite to him, he seemed the person to whom they were principally addressed.

At length the ladies rose to retire. A very great personage in a foreign, but not remote, country once mentioned to the writer of these pages, that he ascribed the superiority of the English in political life, in their conduct of public business and practical views of affairs, in a great measure to 'that little half-hour' that separates, after dinner, the dark from the fair sex. The writer humbly submitted, that if the period of disjunction were strictly limited to a 'little half-hour,' its salutary consequences for both sexes need not be disputed, but that in England the 'little half-hour' was too apt to swell into a term of far more awful character and duration. Lady Everingham was a disciple of the 'very little half-hour' school; for, as she gaily followed her mother, she said to Coningsby, whose gracious lot it was to usher them from the apartment:

'Pray do not be too long at the Board of Guardians to-day.'

These were prophetic words; for no sooner were they all again seated, than the Duke, filling his glass and pushing the claret to Coningsby, observed:

'I suppose Lord Monmouth does not trouble himself much about the New Poor-Law?'

'Hardly,' said Coningsby. 'My grandfather's frequent absence from England, which his health, I be-

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lieve, renders quite necessary, deprives him of the advantage of personal observation on a subject, than which I can myself conceive none more deeply interesting.'

'I am glad to hear you say so,' said the Duke, 'and it does you great credit, and Henry too, whose attention, I observe, is directed very much to these subjects. In my time, the young men did not think so much of such things, and we suffer consequently. By-the-bye, Everingham, you, who are a Chairman of a Board of Guardians, can give me some information. Supposing a case of out-door relief——'

'I could not suppose anything so absurd,' said the son-in-law.

'Well,' rejoined the Duke, 'I know your views on that subject, and it certainly is a question on which there is a good deal to be said. But would you under any circumstances give relief out of the Union, even if the parish were to save a considerable sum?'

'I wish I knew the Union where such a system was followed,' said Lord Everingham; and his Grace seemed to tremble under his son-in-law's glance.

The Duke had a good heart, and not a bad head. If he had not made in his youth so many Latin and English verses, he might have acquired considerable information, for he had a natural love of letters, though his pack were the pride of England, his barrel seldom missed, and his fortune on the turf, where he never betted, was a proverb. He was good, and he wished to do good; but his views were confused from want of knowledge, and his conduct often inconsistent because a sense of duty made him immediately active; and he often acquired in the consequent

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experience a conviction exactly contrary to that which had prompted his activity.

His Grace had been a great patron and a zealous administrator of the New Poor-Law. He had been persuaded that it would elevate the condition of the labouring class. His son-in-law, Lord Everingham, who was a Whig, and a clear-headed, cold-blooded man, looked upon the New Poor-Law as another Magna Charta. Lord Everingham was completely master of the subject. He was himself the Chairman of one of the most considerable Unions of the kingdom. The Duke, if he ever had a misgiving, had no chance in argument with his son-in-law. Lord Everingham overwhelmed him with quotations from Commissioners' rules and Sub-commissioners' reports, statistical tables, and references to dietaries. Sometimes with a strong case, the Duke struggled to make a fight; but Lord Everingham, when he was at fault for a reply, which was very rare, upbraided his father-in-law with the abuses of the old system, and frightened him with visions of rates exceeding rentals.

Of late, however, a considerable change had taken place in the Duke's feelings on this great question. His son Henry entertained strong opinions upon it, and had combated his father with all the fervour of a young votary. A victory over his Grace, indeed, was not very difficult. His natural impulse would have early enlisted him on the side, if not of opposition to the new system, at least of critical suspicion of its spirit and provisions. It was only the statistics and sharp acuteness of his son-in-law that had, indeed, ever kept him to his colours. Lord Henry would not listen to statistics, dietary tables, Commissioners'

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rules, Sub-commissioners' reports. He went far higher than his father; far deeper than his brother-in-law. He represented to the Duke that the order of the peasantry was as ancient, legal, and recognised an order as the order of the nobility; that it had distinct rights and privileges, though for centuries they had been invaded and violated, and permitted to fall into desuetude. He impressed upon the Duke that the parochial constitution of this country was more important than its political constitution; that it was more ancient, more universal in its influence; and that this parochial constitution had already been shaken to its centre by the New Poor-Law. He assured his father that it would never be well for England until this order of the peasantry was restored to its pristine condition; not merely in physical comfort, for that must vary according to the economical circumstances of the time, like that of every class; but to its condition in all those moral attributes which make a recognised rank in a nation; and which, in a great degree, are independent of economics, manners, customs, ceremonies, rights and privileges.

'Henry thinks,' said Lord Everingham, 'that the people are to be fed by dancing round a May-pole.'

'But will the people be fed better because they do not dance round a May-pole?' urged Lord Henry.

'Obsolete customs!' said Lord Everingham.

'And why should dancing round a May-pole be more obsolete than holding a Chapter of the Garter?' asked Lord Henry.

The Duke, who was a blue ribbon, felt this a home thrust. 'I must say,' said his Grace, 'that I for one deeply regret that our popular customs have been permitted to fall so into desuetude.'

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'The Spirit of the Age is against such things,' said Lord Everingham.

'And what is the Spirit of the Age? asked Coningsby.

'The Spirit of Utility,' said Lord Everingham.

'And you think then that ceremony is not useful?' urged Coningsby, mildly.

'It depends upon circumstances,' said Lord Everingham. 'There are some ceremonies, no doubt, that are very proper, and of course very useful. But the best thing we can do for the labouring classes is to provide them with work.'

'But what do you mean by the labouring classes, Everingham?' asked Lord Henry. 'Lawyers are a labouring class, for instance, and by-the-bye sufficiently provided with work. But would you approve of Westminster Hall being denuded of all its ceremonies?'

'And the long vacation being abolished?' added Coningsby.

'Theresa brings me terrible accounts of the sufferings of the poor about us,' said the Duke, shaking his head.

'Women think everything to be suffering!' said Lord Everingham.

'How do you find them about you, Mr. Lyle?' continued the Duke.

'I have revived the monastic customs at St. Geneviève,' said the young man, blushing. 'There is an almsgiving twice a-week.'

'I am sure I wish I could see the labouring classes happy,' said the Duke.

'Oh! pray do not use, my dear father, that phrase, the labouring classes!' said Lord Henry. 'What do

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you think, Coningsby, the other day we had a meeting in this neighbourhood to vote an agricultural petition that was to comprise all classes. I went with my father, and I was made chairman of the committee to draw up the petition. Of course, I described it as the petition of the nobility, clergy, gentry, yeomanry, and peasantry of the county of ——; and, could you believe it, they struck out *peasantry* as a word no longer used, and inserted *labourers*.'

'What can it signify,' said Lord Everingham, 'whether a man be called a labourer or a peasant?'

'And what can it signify,' said his brother-in-law, 'whether a man be called Mr. Howard or Lord Everingham?'

They were the most affectionate family under this roof of Beaumanoir, and of all members of it, Lord Henry the sweetest tempered, and yet it was astonishing what sharp skirmishes every day arose between him and his brother-in-law, during that 'little half-hour' that forms so happily the political character of the nation. The Duke, who from experience felt that a guerilla movement was impending, asked his guests whether they would take any more claret; and on their signifying their dissent, moved an adjournment to the ladies.

They joined the ladies in the music-room. Coningsby, not experienced in feminine society, and who found a little difficulty from want of practice in maintaining conversation, though he was desirous of succeeding, was delighted with Lady Everingham, who, instead of requiring to be amused, amused him; and suggested so many subjects, and glanced at so many topics, that there never was that cold, awkward

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pause, so common with sullen spirits and barren brains. Lady Everingham thoroughly understood the art of conversation, which, indeed, consists of the exercise of two fine qualities. You must originate, and you must sympathise; you must possess at the same time the habit of communicating and the habit of listening. The union is rather rare, but irresistible.

Lady Everingham was not a celebrated beauty, but she was something infinitely more delightful, a captivating woman. There were combined in her, qualities not commonly met together, great vivacity of mind with great grace of manner. Her words sparkled and her movements charmed. There was, indeed, in all she said and did, that congruity that indicates a complete and harmonious organisation. It was the same just proportion which characterised her form: a shape slight and undulating with grace; the most beautifully shaped ear; a small, soft hand; a foot that would have fitted the glass slipper; and which, by-the-bye, she lost no opportunity of displaying; and she was right, for it was a model.

Then there was music. Lady Theresa sang like a seraph: a rich voice, a grand style. And her sister could support her with grace and sweetness. And they did not sing too much. The Duke took up a review, and looked at Rigby's last slashing article. The country seemed ruined, but it appeared that the Whigs were still worse off than the Tories. The assassins had committed suicide. This poetical justice is pleasing. Lord Everingham, lounging in an easy chair, perused with great satisfaction his *Morning Chronicle,* which contained a cutting reply to Mr. Rigby's article, not quite so 'slashing' as the Right

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Honourable scribe's manifesto, but with some searching mockery that became the subject and the subject-monger.

Mr. Lyle seated himself by the Duchess, and encouraged by her amenity, and speaking in whispers, became animated and agreeable, occasionally patting the lap-dog. Coningsby stood by the singers or talked with them when the music had ceased: and Henry Sydney looked over a volume of Strutt's *Sports and Pastimes,* occasionally, without taking his eyes off the volume, calling the attention of his friends to his discoveries.

Mr. Lyle rose to depart, for he had some miles to return; he came forward with some hesitation, to hope that Coningsby would visit his bloodhounds, which Lord Henry had told him Coningsby had expressed a wish to do. Lady Everingham remarked that she had not been at St. Geneviève since she was a girl, and it appeared Lady Theresa had never visited it. Lady Everingham proposed that they should all ride over on the morrow, and she appealed to her husband for his approbation, instantly given, for though she loved admiration, and he apparently was an iceberg, they were really devoted to each other. Then there was a consultation as to their arrangements. The Duchess would drive over in their pony chair with Theresa. The Duke, as usual, had affairs that would occupy him. The rest were to ride. It was a happy suggestion, all anticipated pleasure; and the evening terminated with the prospect of what Lady Everingham called an adventure.

The ladies themselves soon withdrew; the gentlemen lingered for a while; the Duke took up his candle, and bid his guests good night; Lord Everingham

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drank a glass of seltzer water, nodded, and vanished. Lord Henry and his friend sat up talking over the past. They were too young to call them old times; and yet what a life seemed to have elapsed since they had quitted Eton, dear old Eton! Their boyish feelings, and still latent boyish character, developed with their reminiscences.

'Do you remember Bucknall? Which Bucknall? The eldest: I saw him the other day at Nottingham; he is in the Rifles. Do you remember that day at Sirly Hall, that Paulet had that row with Dickinson? Did you like Dickinson? Hum! Paulet was a good fellow. I tell you who was a good fellow, Paulet's little cousin. What! Augustus Le Grange? Oh! I liked Augustus Le Grange. I wonder where Buckhurst is? I had a letter from him the other day. He has gone with his uncle to Paris. We shall find him at Cambridge in October. I suppose you know Millbank has gone to Oriel. Has he, though! I wonder who will have our room at Cookesley's? Cookesley was a good fellow! Oh, capital! How well he behaved when there was that row about our going out with the hounds? Do you remember Vere's face? It makes me laugh now when I think of it. I tell you who was a good fellow, Kangaroo Gray; I liked him. I don't know any fellow who sang a better song!'

'By-the-bye,' said Coningsby, 'what sort of fellow is Eustace Lyle? I rather liked his look.'

'Oh! I will tell you all about him,' said Lord Henry. 'He is a great ally of mine, and I think you will like him very much. It is a Roman Catholic family, about the oldest we have in the county, and the wealthiest. You see, Lyle's father was the most

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violent ultra Whig, and so were all Eustace's guardians; but the moment he came of age, he announced that he should not mix himself up with either of the parties in the county, and that his tenantry might act exactly as they thought fit. My father thinks, of course, that Lyle is a Conservative, and that he only waits the occasion to come forward; but he is quite wrong. I know Lyle well, and he speaks to me without disguise. You see 'tis an old Cavalier family, and Lyle has all the opinions and feelings of his race. He will not ally himself with anti-monarchists, and democrats, and infidels, and sectarians; at the same time, why should he support a party who pretend to oppose these, but who never lose an opportunity of insulting his religion, and would deprive him, if possible, of the advantages of the very institutions which his family assisted in establishing?'

'Why, indeed? I am glad to have made his acquaintance,' said Coningsby. 'Is he clever?'

'I think so,' said Lord Henry. 'He is the most shy fellow, especially among women, that I ever knew, but he is very popular in the county. He does an amazing deal of good, and is one of the best riders we have. My father says, the very best; bold, but so very certain.'

'He is older than we are?'

'My senior by a year: he is just of age.'

'Oh, ah! twenty-one. A year younger than Gaston de Foix when he won Ravenna, and four years younger than John of Austria when he won Lepanto,' observed Coningsby, musingly. 'I vote we go to bed, old fellow!'

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CHAPTER XXII.

'The Light That Lies in Woman's Eyes.'

IN A valley, not far from the margin of a beautiful river, raised on a lofty and artificial terrace at the base of a range of wooded heights, was a pile of modern building in the finest style of Christian architecture. It was of great extent and richly decorated. Built of a white and glittering stone, it sparkled with its pinnacles in the sunshine as it rose in strong relief against its verdant background. The winding valley, which was studded, but not too closely studded, with clumps of old trees, formed for a great extent on either side of the mansion a grassy demesne, which was called the Lower Park; but it was a region bearing the name of the Upper Park that was the peculiar and most picturesque feature of this splendid residence. The wooded heights that formed the valley were not, as they appeared, a range of hills. Their crest was only the abrupt termination of a vast and enclosed table-land, abounding in all the qualities of the ancient chase: turf and trees, a wilderness of underwood, and a vast spread of gorse

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and fern. The deer, which abounded, lived here in a world as savage as themselves: trooping down in the evening to the river. Some of them, indeed, were ever in sight of those who were in the valley, and you might often observe various groups clustered on the green heights above the mansion, the effect of which was most inspiriting and graceful. Sometimes in the twilight, a solitary form, magnified by the illusive hour, might be seen standing on the brink of the steep, large and black against the clear sky.

We have endeavoured slightly to sketch St. Geneviève as it appeared to our friends from Beaumanoir, winding into the valley the day after Mr. Lyle had dined with them. The valley opened for about half-a-mile opposite the mansion, which gave to the dwellers in it a view over an extensive and richly-cultivated country. It was through this district that the party from Beaumanoir had pursued their way. The first glance at the building, its striking situation, its beautiful form, its brilliant colour, its great extent, a gathering as it seemed of galleries, halls, and chapels, mullioned windows, portals of clustered columns, and groups of airy pinnacles and fretwork spires, called forth a general cry of wonder and of praise.

The ride from Beaumanoir had been delightful; the breath of summer in every breeze, the light of summer on every tree. The gay laugh of Lady Everingham rang frequently in the air; often were her sunny eyes directed to Coningsby, as she called his attention to some fair object or some pretty effect. She played the hostess of Nature, and introduced him to all the beauties.

Mr. Lyle had recognised them. He cantered forward with greetings on a fat little fawn-coloured

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pony, with a long white mane and white flowing tail, and the wickedest eye in the world. He rode by the side of the Duchess, and indicated their gently-descending route.

They arrived, and the peacocks, who were sunning themselves on the turrets, expanded their plumage to welcome them.

'I can remember the old house,' said the Duchess, as she took Mr. Lyle's arm; 'and I am happy to see the new one. The Duke had prepared me for much beauty, but the reality exceeds his report.'

They entered by a short corridor into a large hall. They would have stopped to admire its rich roof, its gallery and screen; but their host suggested that they should refresh themselves after their ride, and they followed him through several apartments into a spacious chamber, its oaken panels covered with a series of interesting pictures, representing the siege of St. Geneviève by the Parliament forces in 1643: the various assaults and sallies, and the final discomfiture of the rebels. In all these figured a brave and graceful Sir Eustace Lyle, in cuirass and buff jerkin, with gleaming sword and flowing plume. The sight of these pictures was ever a source of great excitement to Henry Sydney, who always lamented his ill-luck in not living in such days; nay, would insist that all others must equally deplore their evil destiny.

'See, Coningsby, this battery on the Upper Park,' said Lord Henry. 'This did the business: how it rakes up the valley; Sir Eustace works it himself. Mother, what a pity Beaumanoir was not besieged!'

'It may be,' said Coningsby.

'I always fancy a siege must be so interesting,' said Lady Everingham. 'It must be so exciting.'

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'I hope the next siege may be at Beaumanoir, instead of St. Geneviève,' said Lyle, laughing; 'as Henry Sydney has such a military predisposition. Duchess, you said the other day that you liked Malvoisie, and here is some.'

'Now broach me a cask of Malvoisie,
Bring pasty from the doe;'

said the Duchess. 'That has been my luncheon.'

'A poetic repast,' said Lady Theresa.

'Their breeds of sheep must have been very inferior in old days,' said Lord Everingham, 'as they made such a noise about their venison. For my part I consider it a thing as much gone by as tilts and tournaments.'

'I am sorry that they have gone by,' said Lady Theresa.

'Everything has gone by that is beautiful,' said Lord Henry.

'Life is much easier,' said Lord Everingham.

'Life easy!' said Lord Henry. 'Life appears to me to be a fierce struggle.'

'Manners are easy,' said Coningsby, 'and life is hard.'

'And I wish to see things exactly the reverse,' said Lord Henry. 'The means and modes of subsistence less difficult; the conduct of life more ceremonious.'

'Civilisation has no time for ceremony,' said Lord Everingham.

'How very sententious you all are!' said his wife. 'I want to see the hall and many other things.' And they all rose.

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There were indeed many other things to see: a long gallery, rich in ancestral portraits, specimens of art and costume from Holbein to Lawrence; courtiers of the Tudors, and cavaliers of the Stuarts, terminating in red-coated squires fresh from the field, and gentlemen buttoned up in black coats, and sitting in library chairs, with their backs to a crimson curtain. Woman, however, is always charming; and the present generation may view their mothers painted by Lawrence, as if they were patronesses of Almack's; or their grandmothers by Reynolds, as Robinettas caressing birds, with as much delight as they gaze on the dewy-eyed matrons of Lely, and the proud bearing of the heroines of Vandyke. But what interested them more than the gallery, or the rich saloons, or even the baronial hall, was the chapel, in which art had exhausted all its invention, and wealth offered all its resources. The walls and vaulted roofs entirely painted in encaustic by the first artists of Germany, and representing the principal events of the New Testament, the splendour of the mosaic pavement, the richness of the painted windows, the sumptuousness of the altar, crowned by a masterpiece of Carlo Dolce and surrounded by a silver rail, the tone of rich and solemn light that pervaded all, and blended all the various sources of beauty into one absorbing and harmonious whole: all combined to produce an effect which stilled them into a silence that lasted for some minutes, until the ladies breathed their feelings in an almost inarticulate murmur of reverence and admiration, while a tear stole to the eye of the enthusiastic Henry Sydney.

Leaving the chapel, they sauntered through the gardens, until, arriving at their limit, they were met

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by the prettiest sight in the world; a group of little pony chairs, each drawn by a little fat fawn-coloured pony, like the one that Mr. Lyle had been riding. Lord Henry drove his mother; Lord Everingham, Lady Theresa; Lady Everingham was attended by Coningsby. Their host cantered by the Duchess's side, and along winding roads of easy ascent, leading through beautiful woods, and offering charming landscapes, they reached in due time the Upper Park.

'One sees our host to great advantage in his own house,' said Lady Everingham. 'He is scarcely the same person. I have not observed him once blush. He speaks and moves with ease. It is a pity that he is not more graceful. Above all things I like a graceful man.'

'That chapel,' said Coningsby, 'was a fine thing.'

'Very!' said Lady Everingham. 'Did you observe the picture over the altar, the Virgin with blue eyes? I never observed blue eyes before in such a picture. What is your favourite colour for eyes?'

Coningsby felt embarrassed: he said something rather pointless about admiring everything that is beautiful.

'But every one has a favourite style; I want to know yours. Regular features, do you like regular features? Or is it expression that pleases you?'

'Expression; I think I like expression. Expression must be always delightful.'

'Do you dance?'

'No; I am no great dancer. I fear I have few accomplishments. I am fond of fencing.'

'I don't fence,' said Lady Everingham, with a smile. 'But I think you are right not to dance. It is not in your way. You are ambitious, I believe?' she added.

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'I was not aware of it; everybody is ambitious.'

'You see I know something of your character. Henry has spoken of you to me a great deal; long before we met,—met again, I should say, for we are old friends, remember. Do you know your career much interests me? I like ambitious men.'

There is something fascinating in the first idea that your career interests a charming woman. Coningsby felt that he was perhaps driving a Madame de Longueville. A woman who likes ambitious men must be no ordinary character; clearly a sort of heroine. At this moment they reached the Upper Park, and the novel landscape changed the current of their remarks.

Far as the eye could reach there spread before them a savage sylvan scene. It wanted, perhaps, undulation of surface, but that deficiency was greatly compensated for by the multitude and prodigious size of the trees; they were the largest, indeed, that could well be met with in England; and there is no part of Europe where the timber is so huge. The broad interminable glades, the vast avenues, the quantity of deer browsing or bounding in all directions, the thickets of yellow gorse and green fern, and the breeze that even in the stillness of summer was ever playing over this table-land, all produced an animated and renovating scene. It was like suddenly visiting another country, living among other manners, and breathing another air. They stopped for a few minutes at a pavilion built for the purposes of the chase, and then returned, all gratified by this visit to what appeared to be the higher regions of the earth.

As they approached the brow of the hill that hung over St. Geneviève, they heard the great bell sound.

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'What is that?' asked the Duchess.

'It is almsgiving day,' replied Mr. Lyle, looking a little embarrassed, and for the first time blushing. 'The people of the parishes with which I am connected come to St. Geneviève twice a-week at this hour.'

'And what is your system?' inquired Lord Everingham, who had stopped, interested by the scene. 'What check have you?'

'The rectors of the different parishes grant certificates to those who in their belief merit bounty according to the rules which I have established. These are again visited by my almoner, who countersigns the certificate, and then they present it at the posterngate. The certificate explains the nature of their necessities, and my steward acts on his discretion.'

'Mamma, I see them!' exclaimed Lady Theresa.

'Perhaps your Grace may think that they might be relieved without all this ceremony,' said Mr. Lyle, extremely confused. 'But I agree with Henry and Mr. Coningsby, that ceremony is not, as too commonly supposed, an idle form. I wish the people constantly and visibly to comprehend that property is their protector and their friend.'

'My reason is with you, Mr. Lyle,' said the Duchess, 'as well as my heart.'

They came along the valley, a procession of Nature, whose groups an artist might have studied. The old man, who loved the pilgrimage too much to avail himself of the privilege of a substitute accorded to his grey hairs, came in person with his grandchild and his staff. There also came the widow with her child at the breast, and others clinging to her form; some sorrowful faces, and some pale; many a serious

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one, and now and then a frolic glance; many a dame in her red cloak, and many a maiden with her light basket; curly-headed urchins with demure looks, and sometimes a stalwart form baffled for a time of the labour which he desired. But not a heart there that did not bless the bell that sounded from the tower of St. Geneviève!

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CHAPTER XXIII.

JEALOUSY.

'MY FATHERS perilled their blood and fortunes for the cause of the Sovereignty and Church of England,' said Lyle to Coningsby, as they were lying stretched out on the sunny turf in the park of Beaumanoir, 'and I inherit their passionate convictions. They were Catholics, as their descendant. No doubt they would have been glad to see their ancient faith predominant in their ancient land; but they bowed, as I bow, to an adverse and apparently irrevocable decree. But if we could not have the Church of our fathers, we honoured and respected the Church of their children. It was at least a Church; a 'Catholic and Apostolic Church,' as it daily declares itself. Besides, it was our friend. When we were persecuted by Puritanic Parliaments, it was the Sovereign and the Church of England that interposed, with the certainty of creating against themselves odium and mistrust, to shield us from the dark and relentless bigotry of Calvinism.'

'I believe,' said Coningsby, 'that if Charles I. had hanged all the Catholic priests that Parliament peti-

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tioned him to execute, he would never have lost his crown.'

'You were mentioning my father,' continued Lyle. 'He certainly was a Whig. Galled by political exclusion, he connected himself with that party in the State which began to intimate emancipation. After all, they did not emancipate us. It was the fall of the papacy in England that founded the Whig aristocracy; a fact that must always lie at the bottom of their hearts, as, I assure you, it does of mine.'

'I gathered at an early age,' continued Lyle, 'that I was expected to inherit my father's political connections with the family estates. Under ordinary circumstances this would probably have occurred. In times that did not force one to ponder, it is not likely I should have recoiled from uniting myself with a party formed of the best families in England, and ever famous for accomplished men and charming women. But I enter life in the midst of a convulsion in which the very principles of our political and social systems are called in question. I cannot unite myself with the party of destruction. It is an operative cause alien to my being. What, then, offers itself? The Duke talks to me of conservative principles; but he does not inform me what they are. I observe indeed a party in the State whose rule it is to consent to no change, until it is clamorously called for, and then instantly to yield; but those are concessionary, not conservative principles. This party treats institutions as we do our pheasants, they preserve only to destroy them. But is there a statesman among these conservatives who offers us a dogma for a guide, or defines any great political truth which we should aspire to establish? It seems to me a barren thing, this conserva-

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tism, an unhappy cross-breed; the mule of politics that engenders nothing. What do you think of all this, Coningsby? I assure you I feel confused, perplexed, harassed. I know I have public duties to perform; I am, in fact, every day of my life solicited by all parties to throw the weight of my influence in one scale or another; but I am paralysed. I often wish I had no position in the country. The sense of its responsibility depresses me; makes me miserable. I speak to you without reserve; with a frankness which our short acquaintance scarcely authorises; but Henry Sydney has so often talked to me of you, and I have so long wished to know you, that I open my heart without restraint.'

'My dear fellow,' said Coningsby, 'you have but described my feelings when you depictured your own. My mind on these subjects has long been a chaos. I float in a sea of troubles, and should long ago have been wrecked had I not been sustained by a profound, however vague, conviction, that there are still great truths, if we could but work them out; that Government, for instance, should be loved and not hated, and that Religion should be a faith and not a form.'

The moral influence of residence furnishes some of the most interesting traits of our national manners. The presence of this power was very apparent throughout the district that surrounded Beaumanoir. The ladies of that house were deeply sensible of the responsibility of their position; thoroughly comprehending their duties, they fulfilled them without affectation, with earnestness, and with that effect which springs from a knowledge of the subject. The consequences were visible in the tone of the peasantry being superior to that which we too often witness. The

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ancient feudal feeling that lingers in these sequestered haunts is an instrument which, when skilfully wielded, may be productive of vast social benefit. The Duke understood this well; and his family had imbibed all his views, and seconded them. Lady Everingham, once more in the scene of her past life, resumed the exercise of gentle offices, as if she had never ceased to be a daughter of the house, and as if another domain had not its claims upon her solicitude. Coningsby was often the companion of herself and her sister in their pilgrimages of charity and kindness. He admired the graceful energy, and thorough acquaintance with details, with which Lady Everingham superintended schools, organised societies of relief, and the discrimination which she brought to bear upon individual cases of suffering or misfortune. He was deeply interested as he watched the magic of her manner, as she melted the obdurate, inspired the slothful, consoled the afflicted, and animated with her smiles and ready phrase the energetic and the dutiful. Nor on these occasions was Lady Theresa seen under less favourable auspices. Without the vivacity of her sister, there was in her demeanour a sweet seriousness of purpose that was most winning; and sometimes a burst of energy, a trait of decision, which strikingly contrasted with the somewhat over-controlled character of her life in drawing-rooms.

In the society of these engaging companions, time for Coningsby glided away in a course which he sometimes wished nothing might disturb. Apart from them, he frequently felt himself pensive and vaguely disquieted. Even the society of Henry Sydney or Eustace Lyle, much as under ordinary circumstances they would have been adapted to his mood, did not

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compensate for the absence of that indefinite, that novel, that strange, yet sweet excitement, which he felt, he knew not exactly how or why, stealing over his senses. Sometimes the countenance of Theresa Sydney flitted over his musing vision; sometimes the merry voice of Lady Everingham haunted his ear. But to be their companion in ride or ramble; to avoid any arrangement which for many hours should deprive him of their presence, was every day with Coningsby a principal object.

One day he had been out shooting rabbits with Lyle and Henry Sydney, and returned with them late to Beaumanoir to dinner. He had not enjoyed his sport, and he had not shot at all well. He had been dreamy, silent, had deeply felt the want of Lady Everingham's conversation, that was ever so poignant and so interestingly personal to himself; one of the secrets of her sway, though Coningsby was not then quite conscious of it. Talk to a man about himself, and he is generally captivated. That is the real way to win him. The only difference between men and women in this respect is, that most women are vain, and some men are not. There are some men who have no self-love; but if they have, female vanity is but a trifling and airy passion compared with the vast voracity of appetite which in the sterner sex can swallow anything, and always crave for more.

When Coningsby entered the drawing-room, there seemed a somewhat unusual bustle in the room, but as the twilight had descended, it was at first rather difficult to distinguish who was present. He soon perceived that there were strangers. A gentleman of pleasing appearance was near a sofa on which the Duchess and Lady Everingham were seated, and dis-

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coursing with some volubility. His phrases seemed to command attention; his audience had an animated glance, eyes sparkling with intelligence and interest; not a word was disregarded. Coningsby did not advance as was his custom; he had a sort of instinct that the stranger was discoursing of matters of which he knew nothing. He turned to a table, he took up a book, which he began to read upside downwards. A hand was lightly placed on his shoulder. He looked round; it was another stranger, who said, however, in a tone of familiar friendliness,

'How do you do, Coningsby?'

It was a young man about four-and-twenty years of age, tall, good-looking. Old recollections, his intimate greeting, a strong family likeness, helped Coningsby to conjecture correctly who was the person who addressed him. It was, indeed, the eldest son of the Duke, the Marquis of Beaumanoir, who had arrived at his father's unexpectedly with his friend, Mr. Melton, on their way to the north.

Mr. Melton was a gentleman of the highest fashion, and a great favourite in society. He was about thirty, good-looking, with an air that commanded attention, and manners, though facile, sufficiently finished. He was communicative, though calm, and without being witty, had at his service a turn of phrase, acquired by practice and success, which was, or which always seemed to be, poignant. The ladies seemed especially to be delighted at his arrival. He knew everything of everybody they cared about; and Coningsby listened in silence to names which for the first time reached his ears, but which seemed to excite great interest. Mr. Melton frequently addressed his most lively observations and

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his most sparkling anecdotes to Lady Everingham, who evidently relished all that he said, and returned him in kind.

Throughout the dinner Lady Everingham and Mr. Melton maintained what appeared a most entertaining conversation, principally about things and persons which did not in any way interest our hero; who, however, had the satisfaction of hearing Lady Everingham, in the drawing-room, say in a careless tone to the Duchess.

'I am so glad, mamma, that Mr. Melton has come; we wanted some amusement.'

What a confession! What a revelation to Coningsby of his infinite insignificance! Coningsby entertained a great aversion for Mr. Melton, but felt his spirit unequal to the social contest. The genius of the untutored, inexperienced youth quailed before that of the long-practised, skilful man of the world. What was the magic of this man? What was the secret of this ease, that nothing could disturb, and yet was not deficient in deference and good taste? And then his dress, it seemed fashioned by some unearthly artist; yet it was impossible to detect the unobtrusive causes of the general effect that was irresistible. Coningsby's coat was made by Stultz; almost every fellow in the sixth form had his coats made by Stultz; yet Coningsby fancied that his own garment looked as if it had been furnished by some rustic slopseller. He began to wonder where Mr. Melton got his boots from and glanced at his own, which, though made in St. James's Street, seemed to him to have a cloddish air.

Lady Everingham was determined that Mr. Melton should see Beaumanoir to the greatest advantage. Mr. Melton had never been there before, except at

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Christmas, with the house full of visitors and factitious gaiety. Now he was to see the country. Accordingly, there were long rides every day, which Lady Everingham called expeditions, and which generally produced some slight incident which she styled an adventure. She was kind to Coningsby, but had no time to indulge in the lengthened conversations which he had previously found so magical. Mr. Melton was always on the scene, the monopolising hero, it would seem, of every thought, and phrase, and plan. Coningsby began to think that Beaumanoir was not so delightful a place as he had imagined. He began to think that he had stayed there perhaps too long. He had received a letter from Mr. Rigby, to inform him that he was expected at Coningsby Castle at the beginning of September, to meet Lord Monmouth, who had returned to England, and for grave and special reasons was about to reside at his chief seat, which he had not visited for many years. Coningsby had intended to have remained at Beaumanoir until that time; but suddenly it occurred to him, that the Age of Ruins was past, and that he ought to seize the opportunity of visiting Manchester, which was in the same county as the castle of his grandfather. So difficult is it to speculate upon events! Muse as we may, we are the creatures of circumstances; and the unexpected arrival of a London dandy at the country-seat of an English nobleman sent this representative of the New Generation, fresh from Eton, nursed in prejudices, yet with a mind predisposed to inquiry and prone to meditation, to a scene apt to stimulate both intellectual processes; which demanded investigation and induced thought, the great Metropolis of Labour.

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CHAPTER XXIV.

A New World.

A GREAT city, whose image dwells in the memory of man, is the type of some great idea. Rome represents conquest; Faith hovers over the towers of Jerusalem; and Athens embodies the pre-eminent quality of the antique world, Art.

In modern ages, commerce has created London; while manners, in the most comprehensive sense of the word, have long found a supreme capital in the airy and bright-minded city of the Seine.

What Art was to the ancient world, Science is to the modern: the distinctive faculty. In the minds of men the useful has succeeded to the beautiful. [Instead of the city of the Violet Crown,] a Lancashire village has expanded into a mighty region of factories and warehouses. Yet, rightly understood, Manchester is as great a human exploit as Athens.

The inhabitants, indeed, are not so impressed with their idiosyncrasy as the countrymen of Pericles and Phidias. They do not fully comprehend the position which they occupy. It is the philosopher alone who can conceive the grandeur of Manchester, and the immensity of its future. There are yet great truths to

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tell, if we had either the courage to announce or the temper to receive them.

A feeling of melancholy, even of uneasiness, attends our first entrance into a great town, especially at night. Is it that the sense of all this vast existence with which we have no connexion, where we are utterly unknown, oppresses us with our insignificance? Is it that it is terrible to feel friendless where all have friends?

Yet reverse the picture. Behold a community where you are unknown, but where you will be known, perhaps honoured. A place where you have no friends, but where, also, you have no enemies. A spot that has hitherto been a blank in your thoughts, as you have been a cipher in its sensations, and yet a spot, perhaps, pregnant with your destiny!

There is, perhaps, no act of memory so profoundly interesting as to recall the careless mood and moment in which we have entered a town, a house, a chamber, on the eve of an acquaintance or an event that have given a colour and an impulse to our future life.

What is this fatality that men worship? Is it a goddess?

Unquestionably it is a power that acts mainly by female agents. Women are the priestesses of predestination.

Man conceives fortune, but woman conducts it.

It is the spirit of man that says, 'I will be great;' but it is the sympathy of woman that usually makes him so.

It was not the comely and courteous hostess of the Adelphi Hotel, Manchester, that gave occasion to these remarks, though she may deserve them, and

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though she was most kind to our Coningsby as he came in late at night very tired, and not in very good humour.

He had travelled the whole day through the great district of labour, his mind excited by strange sights, and at length wearied by their multiplication. He had passed over the plains where iron and coal supersede turf and corn, dingy as the entrance of Hades, and flaming with furnaces; and now he was among illumined factories, with more windows than Italian palaces, and smoking chimneys taller than Egyptian obelisks. Alone in the great metropolis of machinery itself, sitting down in a solitary coffee-room glaring with gas, with no appetite, a whirling head, and not a plan or purpose for the morrow, why was he there? Because a being, whose name even was unknown to him, had met him in a hedge alehouse during a thunder-storm, and told him that the age of ruins was past.

Remarkable instance of the influence of an individual; some evidence of the extreme susceptibility of our hero.

Even his bedroom was lit by gas. Wonderful city! That, however, could be got rid of. He opened the window. The summer air was sweet, even in this land of smoke and toil. He feels a sensation such as in Lisbon or Lima precedes an earthquake. The house appears to quiver. It is a sympathetic affection occasioned by a steam-engine in a neighbouring factory.

Notwithstanding, however, all these novel incidents, Coningsby slept the deep sleep of youth and health, of a brain which, however occasionally perplexed by thought, had never been harassed by

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anxiety. He rose early, freshened, and in fine spirits. And by the time the deviled chicken and the buttered toast, that mysterious and incomparable luxury, which can only be obtained at an inn, had disappeared, he felt all the delightful excitement of travel.

And now for action! Not a letter had Coningsby; not an individual in that vast city was known to him. He went to consult his kind hostess, who smiled confidence. He was to mention her name at one place, his own at another. All would be right; she seemed to have reliance in the destiny of such a nice young man.

He saw all; they were kind and hospitable to the young stranger, whose thought, and earnestness, and gentle manners attracted them. One recommended him to another; all tried to aid and assist him. He entered chambers vaster than are told of in Arabian fable, and peopled with habitants more wondrous than Afrite or Peri. For there he beheld, in long-continued ranks, those mysterious forms full of existence without life, that perform with facility, and in an instant, what man can fulfil only with difficulty and in days. A machine is a slave that neither brings nor bears degradation; it is a being endowed with the greatest degree of energy, and acting under the greatest degree of excitement, yet free at the same time from all passion and emotion. It is, therefore, not only a slave, but a supernatural slave. And why should one say that the machine does not live? It breathes, for its breath forms the atmosphere of some towns. It moves with more regularity than man. And has it not a voice? Does not the spindle sing like a merry girl at her work, and the steam-engine roar in jolly chorus, like a strong artisan

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handling his lusty tools, and gaining a fair day's wages for a fair day's toil?

Nor should the weaving-room be forgotten, where a thousand or fifteen hundred girls may be observed in their coral necklaces, working like Penelope in the daytime; some pretty, some pert, some graceful and jocund, some absorbed in their occupation; a little serious some, few sad. And the cotton you have observed in its rude state, that you have seen the silent spinner change into thread, and the bustling weaver convert into cloth, you may now watch as in a moment it is tinted with beautiful colours, or printed with fanciful patterns. And yet the mystery of mysteries is to view machines making machines; a spectacle that fills the mind with curious, and even awful speculation.

From early morn to the late twilight, our Coningsby for several days devoted himself to the comprehension of Manchester. It was to him a new world, pregnant with new ideas, and suggestive of new trains of thought and feeling. In this unprecedented partnership between capital and science, working on a spot which Nature had indicated as the fitting theatre of their exploits, he beheld a great source of the wealth of nations which had been reserved for these times, and he perceived that this wealth was rapidly developing classes whose power was imperfectly recognised in the constitutional scheme, and whose duties in the social system seemed altogether omitted. Young as he was, the bent of his mind, and the inquisitive spirit of the times, had sufficiently prepared him, not indeed to grapple with these questions, but to be sensible of their existence, and to ponder.

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One evening, in the coffee-room of the hotel, having just finished his well-earned dinner, and relaxing his mind for the moment in a fresh research into the Manchester Guide, an individual, who had also been dining in the same apartment, rose from his table, and, after lolling over the empty fireplace, reading the framed announcements, looking at the directions of several letters waiting there for their owners, picking his teeth, turned round to Coningsby, and, with an air of uneasy familiarity, said,—

'First visit to Manchester, sir?'

'My first.'

'Gentleman traveller, I presume?'

'I am a traveller,' said Coningsby.

'Hem! From south?'

'From the south.'

'And pray, sir, how did you find business as you came along? Brisk, I dare say. And yet there is a something, a sort of a something; didn't it strike you, sir, there was a something? A deal of queer paper about, sir!'

'I fear you are speaking on a subject of which I know nothing,' said Coningsby, smiling; 'I do not understand business at all; though I am not surprised that, being at Manchester, you should suppose so.'

'Ah! not in business. Hem! Professional?'

'No,' said Coningsby, 'I am nothing.'

'Ah! an independent gent; hem! and a very pleasant thing, too. Pleased with Manchester, I dare say?' continued the stranger.

'And astonished,' said Coningsby; 'I think, in the whole course of my life, I never saw so much to admire.'

'Seen all the lions, have no doubt?'

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'I think I have seen everything,' said Coningsby, rather eager and with some pride.

'Very well, very well,' exclaimed the stranger, in a patronising tone. 'Seen Mr. Birley's weaving-room, I dare say?'

'Oh! isn't it wonderful?' said Coningsby.

'A great many people,' said the stranger, with a rather supercilious smile.

'But after all,' said Coningsby, with animation, 'it is the machinery without any interposition of manual power that overwhelms me. It haunts me in my dreams,' continued Coningsby; 'I see cities peopled with machines. Certainly Manchester is the most wonderful city of modern times!'

The stranger stared a little at the enthusiasm of his companion, and then picked his teeth.

'Of all the remarkable things here,' said Coningsby, 'what on the whole, sir, do you look upon as the most so?'

'In the way of machinery?' asked the stranger.

'In the way of machinery.'

'Why, in the way of machinery, you know,' said the stranger, very quietly, 'Manchester is a dead letter.'

'A dead letter!' said Coningsby.

'Dead and buried,' said the stranger, accompanying his words with that peculiar application of his thumb to his nose that signifies so eloquently that all is up.

'You astonish me!' said Coningsby.

'It's a booked place though,' said the stranger, 'and no mistake. We have all of us a very great respect for Manchester, in course; look upon her as a sort of mother, and all that sort of thing. But she is

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behind the times, sir, and that won't do in this age. The long and short of it is, Manchester is gone by.'

'I thought her only fault might be she was too much in advance of the rest of the country,' said Coningsby, innocently.

'If you want to see life,' said the stranger, 'go to Staley-bridge or Bolton. There's high pressure.'

'But the population of Manchester is increasing,' said Coningsby.

'Why, yes; not a doubt. You see, we have all of us a great respect for the town. It is a sort of metropolis of this district, and there is a good deal of capital in the place. And it has some firstrate institutions. There's the Manchester Bank. That's a noble institution, full of commercial enterprise; understands the age, sir; high-pressure to the backbone. I came up to town to see the manager to-day. I am building a new mill now myself at Staley-bridge, and mean to open it by January, and when I do, I'll give you leave to pay another visit to Mr. Birley's weaving-room, with my compliments.'

'I am very sorry,' said Coningsby, 'that I have only another day left; but pray tell me, what would you recommend me most to see within a reasonable distance of Manchester?'

'My mill is not finished,' said the stranger musingly, 'and though there is still a great deal worth seeing at Staley-bridge, still you had better wait to see my new mill. And Bolton, let me see; Bolton, there is nothing at Bolton that can hold up its head for a moment against my new mill; but then it is not finished. Well, well, let us see. What a pity this is not the 1st of January, and then my new mill would be at work! I should like to see Mr. Birley's

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face, or even Mr. Ashworth's, that day. And the Oxford Road Works, where they are always making a little change, bit-by-bit reform, eh! not a very particular fine appetite, I suspect, for dinner, at the Oxford Road Works, the day they hear of my new mill being at work. But you want to see something tip-top. Well, there's Millbank; that's regular slap-up, quite a sight, regular lion; if I were you, I would see Millbank.'

'Millbank!' said Coningsby; 'what Millbank?'

'Millbank of Millbank, made the place, made it himself. About three miles from Bolton; train to-morrow morning at 7.25, get a fly at the station, and you will be at Millbank by 8.40.'

'Unfortunately I am engaged to-morrow morning,' said Coningsby, 'and yet I am most anxious, particularly anxious, to see Millbank.'

'Well, there's a late train,' said the stranger, '3.15; you will be there by 4.30.'

'I think I could manage that,' said Coningsby.

'Do,' said the stranger; 'and if you ever find yourself at Staley-bridge, I shall be very happy to be of service. I must be off now. My train goes at 9.15.' And he presented Coningsby with his card as he wished him good night.

MR. G. O. A. HEAD,
STALEY-BRIDGE.

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CHAPTER XXV.

Millbank of Millbank.

IN A green valley of Lancaster, contiguous to that district of factories on which we have already touched, a clear and powerful stream flows through a broad meadow land. Upon its margin, adorned, rather than shadowed, by some old elm-trees, for they are too distant to serve except for ornament, rises a vast deep red brick pile, which though formal and monotonous in its general character, is not without a certain beauty of proportion and an artist-like finish in its occasional masonry. The front, which is of great extent, and covered with many tiers of small windows, is flanked by two projecting wings in the same style, which form a large court, completed by a dwarf wall crowned with a light, and rather elegant railing; in the centre, the principal entrance, a lofty portal of bold and beautiful design, surmounted by a statue of Commerce.

This building, not without a degree of dignity, is what is technically, and not very felicitously, called a mill; always translated by the French in their accounts of our manufacturing riots, 'moulin,' and which really was the principal factory of Oswald

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Millbank, the father of that youth whom we trust our readers have not quite forgotten.

At some little distance, and rather withdrawn from the principal stream, were two other smaller structures of the same style. About a quarter of a mile further on, appeared a village of not inconsiderable size, and remarkable from the neatness and even picturesque character of its architecture, and the gay gardens that surrounded it. On a sunny knoll in the background rose a church, in the best style of Christian architecture, and near it was a clerical residence and a school-house of similar design. The village, too, could boast of another public building; an Institute where there were a library and a lecture-room; and a reading-hall, which any one might frequent at certain hours, and under reasonable regulations.

On the other side of the principal factory, but more remote, about half-a-mile up the valley, surrounded by beautiful meadows, and built on an agreeable and well-wooded elevation, was the mansion of the mill-owner; apparently a commodious and not inconsiderable dwelling-house, built in what is called a villa style, with a variety of gardens and conservatories. The atmosphere of this somewhat striking settlement was not disturbed and polluted by the dark vapour, which, to the shame of Manchester, still infests that great town, for Mr. Millbank, who liked nothing so much as an invention, unless it were an experiment, took care to consume his own smoke.

The sun was declining when Coningsby arrived at Millbank, and the gratification which he experienced on first beholding it was not a little diminished, when. on enquiring at the village, he was informed that the hour was past for seeing the works. Deter-

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mined not to relinquish his purpose without a struggle, he repaired to the principal mill, and entered the counting-house, which was situated in one of the wings of the building.

'Your pleasure, sir?' said one of three individuals sitting on high stools behind a high desk.

'I wish, if possible, to see the works.'

'Quite impossible, sir;' and the clerk, withdrawing his glance, continued his writing. 'No admission without an order, and no admission with an order after two o'clock.'

'I am very unfortunate,' said Coningsby.

'Sorry for it, sir. Give me ledger K. X., will you, Mr. Benson?'

'I think Mr. Millbank would grant me permission,' said Coningsby.

'Very likely, sir; to-morrow. Mr. Millbank is there, sir, but very much engaged.' He pointed to an inner counting-house, and the glass doors permitted Coningsby to observe several individuals in close converse.

'Perhaps his son, Mr. Oswald Millbank, is here?' inquired Coningsby.

'Mr. Oswald is in Belgium,' said the clerk.

'Would you give a message to Mr. Millbank, and say a friend of his son at Eton is here, and here only for a day, and wishes very much to see his works?'

'Can't possibly disturb Mr. Millbank now, sir; but, if you like to sit down, you can wait and see him yourself.'

Coningsby was content to sit down, though he grew very impatient at the end of a quarter of an hour. The ticking of the clock, the scratching of

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the pens of the three silent clerks, irritated him. At length, voices were heard, doors opened, and the clerk said, 'Mr. Millbank is coming, sir,' but nobody came; voices became hushed, doors were shut; again nothing was heard, save the ticking of the clock and the scratching of the pens.

At length there was a general stir, and they all did come forth, Mr. Millbank among them, a well-proportioned, comely man, with a fair face inclining to ruddiness, a quick, glancing, hazel eye, the whitest teeth, and short, curly, chestnut hair, here and there slightly tinged with grey. It was a visage of energy and decision.

He was about to pass through the counting-house with his companions, with whom his affairs were not concluded, when he observed Coningsby, who had risen.

'This gentleman wishes to see me?' he inquired of his clerk, who bowed assent.

'I shall be at your service, sir, the moment I have finished with these gentlemen.'

'The gentleman wishes to see the works, sir,' said the clerk.

'He can see the works at proper times,' said Mr. Millbank, somewhat pettishly; 'tell him the regulations;' and he was about to go.

'I beg your pardon, sir,' said Coningsby, coming forward, and with an air of earnestness and grace that arrested the step of the manufacturer. 'I am aware of the regulations, but would beg to be permitted to infringe them.'

'It cannot be, sir,' said Mr. Millbank, moving.

'I thought, sir, being here only for a day, and as a friend of your son——'

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Mr. Millbank stopped and said,

'Oh! a friend of Oswald, eh? What, at Eton?'

'Yes, sir, at Eton; and I had hoped perhaps to have found him here.'

'I am very much engaged, sir, at this moment,' said Mr. Millbank; 'I am sorry I cannot pay you any personal attention, but my clerk will show you everything. Mr. Benson, let this gentleman see everything;' and he withdrew.

'Be pleased to write your name here, sir,' said Mr. Benson, opening a book, and our friend wrote his name and the date of his visit to Millbank:

'HARRY CONINGSBY, SEPT. 2, 1836.'

Coningsby beheld in this great factory the last and the most refined inventions of mechanical genius. The building had been fitted up by a capitalist as anxious to raise a monument of the skill and power of his order as to obtain a return for the great investment.

'It is the glory of Lancashire!' exclaimed the enthusiastic Mr. Benson.

The clerk spoke freely of his master, whom he evidently idolised, and his great achievements, and Coningsby encouraged him. He detailed to Coningsby the plans which Mr. Millbank had pursued, both for the moral and physical well-being of his people; how he had built churches, and schools, and institutes; houses and cottages on a new system of ventilation; how he had allotted gardens; established singing classes.

'Here is Mr. Millbank,' continued the clerk, as he and Coningsby, quitting the factory, re-entered the court.

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Mr. Millbank was approaching the factory, and the moment that he observed them, he quickened his pace.

'Mr. Coningsby?' he said, when he reached them. His countenance was rather disturbed, and his voice a little trembled, and he looked on our friend with a glance scrutinising and serious. Coningsby bowed.

'I am sorry that you should have been received at this place with so little ceremony, sir,' said Mr. Millbank; 'but had your name been mentioned, you would have found it cherished here.' He nodded to the clerk, who disappeared.

Coningsby began to talk about the wonders of the factory, but Mr. Millbank recurred to other thoughts that were passing in his mind. He spoke of his son: he expressed a kind reproach that Coningsby should have thought of visiting this part of the world without giving them some notice of his intention, that he might have been their guest, that Oswald might have been there to receive him, that they might have made arrangements that he should see everything, and in the best manner; in short, that they might all have shown, however slightly, the deep sense of their obligations to him.

'My visit to Manchester, which led to this, was quite accidental,' said Coningsby. 'I am bound for the other division of the county, to pay a visit to my grandfather, Lord Monmouth; but an irresistible desire came over me during my journey to view this famous district of industry. It is some days since I ought to have found myself at Coningsby, and this is the reason why I am so pressed.'

A cloud passed over the countenance of Millbank as the name of Lord Monmouth was mentioned, but

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he said nothing. Turning towards Coningsby, with an air of kindness:

'At least,' said he, 'let not Oswald hear that you did not taste our salt. Pray dine with me to-day; there is yet an hour to dinner; and as you have seen the factory, suppose we stroll together through the village.'

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CHAPTER XXVI.

EDITH.

HE village clock struck five as Mr. Millbank and his guest entered the gardens of his mansion. Coningsby lingered a moment to admire the beauty and gay profusion of the flowers.

'Your situation,' said Coningsby, looking up the green and silent valley, 'is absolutely poetic.'

'I try sometimes to fancy,' said Mr. Millbank, with a rather fierce smile, 'that I am in the New World.'

They entered the house; a capacious and classic hall, at the end a staircase in the Italian fashion. As they approached it, the sweetest and the clearest voice exclaimed from above, 'Papa! papa!' and instantly a young girl came bounding down the stairs, but suddenly seeing a stranger with her father she stopped upon the landing-place, and was evidently on the point of as rapidly retreating as she had advanced, when Mr. Millbank waved his hand to her and begged her to descend. She came down slowly; as she approached them her father said, 'A friend you have often heard of, Edith: this is Mr. Coningsby.'

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She started; blushed very much; and then, with a trembling and uncertain gait, advanced, put forth her hand with a wild unstudied grace, and said in a tone of sensibility, 'How often have we all wished to see and to thank you!'

This daughter of his host was of tender years; apparently she could scarcely have counted sixteen summers. She was delicate and fragile, but as she raised her still blushing visage to her father's guest, Coningsby felt that he had never beheld a countenance of such striking and such peculiar beauty.

'My only daughter, Mr. Coningsby, Edith; a Saxon name, for she is the daughter of a Saxon.'

But the beauty of the countenance was not the beauty of the Saxons. It was a radiant face, one of those that seem to have been touched in their cradle by a sunbeam, and to have retained all their brilliancy and suffused and mantling lustre. One marks sometimes such faces, diaphanous with delicate splendour, in the southern regions of France. Her eye, too, was the rare eye of Aquitaine; soft and long, with lashes drooping over the cheek, dark as her clustering ringlets.

They entered the drawing-room.

'Mr. Coningsby,' said Millbank to his daughter, 'is in this part of the world only for a few hours, or I am sure he would become our guest. He has, however, promised to stay with us now and dine.'

'If Miss Millbank will pardon this dress,' said Coningsby, bowing an apology for his inevitable frock and boots; the maiden raised her eyes and bent her head.

The hour of dinner was at hand. Millbank offered to show Coningsby to his dressing-room. He was

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absent but a few minutes. When he returned he found Miss Millbank alone. He came somewhat suddenly into the room. She was playing with her dog, but ceased the moment she observed Coningsby.

Coningsby, who since his practice with Lady Everingham, flattered himself that he had advanced in small talk, and was not sorry that he had now an opportunity of proving his prowess, made some lively observations about pets and the breeds of lapdogs, but he was not fortunate in extracting a response or exciting a repartee. He began then on the beauty of Millbank, which he would on no account have avoided seeing, and inquired when she had last heard of her brother. The young lady, apparently much distressed, was murmuring something about Antwerp, when the entrance of her father relieved her from her embarrassment.

Dinner being announced, Coningsby offered his arm to his fair companion, who took it with her eyes fixed on the ground.

'You are very fond, I see, of flowers,' said Coningsby, as they moved along; and the young lady said 'Yes.'

The dinner was plain, but perfect of its kind. The young hostess seemed to perform her office with a certain degree of desperate determination. She looked at a chicken and then at Coningsby, and murmured something which he understood. Sometimes she informed herself of his tastes or necessities in more detail, by the medium of her father, whom she treated as a sort of dragoman; in this way: 'Would not Mr. Coningsby, papa, take this or that, or do so and so?' Coningsby was always careful to reply in a direct manner, without the agency of the interpreter;

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but he did not advance. Even a petition for the great honour of taking a glass of sherry with her only induced the beautiful face to bow. And yet when she had first seen him, she had addressed him even with emotion. What could it be? He felt less confidence in his increased power of conversation. Why, Theresa Sydney was scarcely a year older than Miss Millbank, and though she did not certainly originate like Lady Everingham, he got on with her perfectly well.

Mr. Millbank did not seem to be conscious of his daughter's silence: at any rate, he attempted to compensate for it. He talked fluently and well; on all subjects his opinions seemed to be decided, and his language was precise. He was really interested in what Coningsby had seen, and what he had felt; and this sympathy divested his manner of the disagreeable effect that accompanies a tone inclined to be dictatorial. More than once Coningsby observed the silent daughter listening with extreme attention to the conversation of himself and her father.

The dessert was remarkable. Millbank was proud of his fruit. A bland expression of self-complacency spread over his features as he surveyed his grapes, his peaches, his figs.

'These grapes have gained a medal,' he told Coningsby. 'Those too are prize peaches. I have not yet been so successful with my figs. These, however, promise, and perhaps this year I may be more fortunate.'

'What would your brother and myself have given for such a dessert at Eton!' said Coningsby to Miss Millbank, wishing to say something, and something too that might interest her.

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She seemed infinitely distressed, and yet this time would speak.

'Let me give you some.' He caught by chance her glance immediately withdrawn; yet it was a glance not only of beauty, but of feeling and thought. She added, in a hushed and hurried tone, dividing very nervously some grapes, 'I hardly know whether Oswald will be most pleased or grieved when he hears that you have been here.'

'And why grieved?' said Coningsby.

'That he should not have been here to welcome you, and that your stay is for so brief a time. It seems so strange that after having talked of you for years, we should see you only for hours.'

'I hope I may return,' said Coningsby, 'and that Millbank may be here to welcome me; but I hope I may be permitted to return even if he be not.'

But there was no reply; and soon after, Mr. Millbank talking of the American market, and Coningsby helping himself to a glass of claret, the daughter of the Saxon, looking at her father, rose and left the room, so suddenly and so quickly that Coningsby could scarcely gain the door.

'Yes,' said Millbank, filling his glass, and pursuing some previous observations, 'all that we want in this country is to be masters of our own industry; but Saxon industry and Norman manners never will agree; and some day, Mr. Coningsby, you will find that out.'

'But what do you mean by Norman manners?' inquired Coningsby.

'Did you ever hear of the Forest of Rossendale?' said Millbank. 'If you were staying here, you should visit the district. It is an area of twenty-four square

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miles. It was disforested in the early part of the sixteenth century, possessing at that time eighty inhabitants. Its rental in James the First's time was 120*l.* When the woollen manufacture was introduced into the north, the shuttle competed with the plough in Rossendale, and about forty years ago we sent them the jenny. The eighty souls are now increased to upwards of eighty thousand, and the rental of the forest, by the last county assessment, amounts to more than 50,000*l.*, 41,000 per cent. on the value in the reign of James I. Now I call that an instance of Saxon industry competing successfully with Norman manners.'

'Exactly,' said Coningsby, 'but those manners are gone.'

'From Rossendale,' said Millbank, with a grim smile; 'but not from England.'

'Where do you meet them?'

'Meet them! In every place, at every hour; and feel them, too, in every transaction of life.'

'I know, sir, from your son,' said Coningsby, inquiringly, 'that you are opposed to an aristocracy.'

'No, I am not. I am for an aristocracy; but a real one, a natural one.'

'But, sir, is not the aristocracy of England,' said Coningsby, 'a real one? You do not confound our peerage, for example, with the degraded patricians of the Continent.'

'Hum!' said Millbank. 'I do not understand how an aristocracy can exist unless it be distinguished by some quality which no other class of the community possesses. Distinction is the basis of aristocracy. If you permit only one class of the population, for example, to bear arms, they are an aristocracy; not one

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much to my taste; but still a great fact. That, however, is not the characteristic of the English peerage. I haye yet to learn they are richer than we are, better informed, wiser, or more distinguished for public or private virtue. Is it not monstrous, then, that a small number of men, several of whom take the titles of Duke and Earl from towns in this very neighbourhood, towns which they never saw, which never heard of them, which they did not form, or build, or establish,—I say, is it not monstrous that individuals so circumstanced should be invested with the highest of conceivable privileges, the privilege of making laws? Dukes and Earls indeed! I say there is nothing in a masquerade more ridiculous.'

'But do you not argue from an exception, sir?' said Coningsby. 'The question is, whether a preponderance of the aristocratic principle in a political constitution be, as I believe, conducive to the stability and permanent power of a state; and whether the peerage, as established in England, generally tends to that end? We must not forget in such an estimate the influence which, in this country, is exercised over opinion by ancient lineage.'

'Ancient lineage!' said Mr. Millbank; 'I never heard of a peer with an ancient lineage. The real old families of this country are to be found among the peasantry; the gentry, too, may lay some claim to old blood. I can point you out Saxon families in this county who can trace their pedigrees beyond the Conquest; I know of some Norman gentlemen whose fathers undoubtedly came over with the Conqueror. But a peer with an ancient lineage is to me quite a novelty. No, no; the thirty years of the wars of the Roses freed us from those gentlemen. I take it,

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after the battle of Tewkesbury a Norman baron was almost as rare a being in England as a wolf is now.'

'I have always understood,' said Coningsby, 'that our peerage was the finest in Europe.'

'From themselves,' said Millbank, 'and the heralds they pay to paint their carriages. But I go to facts. When Henry VII. called his first Parliament, there were only twenty-nine temporal peers to be found, and even some of them took their seats illegally, for they had been attainted. Of those twenty-nine not five remain, and they, as the Howards for instance, are not Norman nobility. We owe the English peerage to three sources: the spoliation of the Church; the open and flagrant sale of its honours by the elder Stuarts; and the borough-mongering of our own times. Those are the three main sources of the existing peerage of England, and in my opinion disgraceful ones. But I must apologise for my frankness in thus speaking to an aristocrat.'

'Oh, by no means, sir; I like discussion. Your son and myself at Eton have had some encounters of this kind before. But if your view of the case be correct,' added Coningsby, smiling, 'you cannot at any rate accuse our present peers of Norman manners.'

'Yes, I do: they adopted Norman manners while they usurped Norman titles. They have neither the right of the Normans, nor do they fulfil the duty of the Normans: they did not conquer the land, and they do not defend it.'

'And where will you find your natural aristocracy?' asked Coningsby.

'Among those men whom a nation recognises as the most eminent for virtue, talents, and property,

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and, if you please, birth and standing in the land. They guide opinion; and, therefore, they govern. I am no leveller; I look upon an artificial equality as equally pernicious with a factitious aristocracy; both depressing the energies, and checking the enterprise of a nation. I like man to be free, really free: free in his industry as well as his body. What is the use of Habeas Corpus, if a man may not use his hands when he is out of prison?'

'But it appears to me you have, in a great measure, this natural aristocracy in England.'

'Ah, to be sure! If we had not, where should we be? It is the counteracting power that saves us, the disturbing cause in the calculations of short-sighted selfishness. I say it now, and I have said it a hundred times, the House of Commons is a more aristocratic body than the House of Lords. The fact is, a great peer would be a greater man now in the House of Commons than in the House of Lords. Nobody wants a second chamber, except a few disreputable individuals. It is a valuable institution for any member of it who has no distinction, neither character, talents, nor estate. But a peer who possesses all or any of these great qualifications, would find himself an immeasurably more important personage in what, by way of jest, they call the Lower House.'

'Is not the revising wisdom of a senate a salutary check on the precipitation of a popular assembly?'

'Why should a popular assembly, elected by the flower of a nation, be precipitate? If precipitate, what senate could stay an assembly so chosen? No, no, no! the thing has been tried over and over again; the idea of restraining the powerful by the weak is an absurdity; the question is settled. If we wanted a

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fresh illustration, we need only look at the present state of our own House of Lords. It originates nothing; it has, in fact, announced itself as a mere Court of Registration of the decrees of your House of Commons; and if by any chance it ventures to alter some miserable detail in a clause of a bill that excites public interest, what a clatter through the country, at Conservative banquets got up by the rural attorneys, about the power, authority, and independence of the House of Lords; nine times nine, and one cheer more! No, sir, you may make aristocracies by laws; you can only maintain them by manners. The manners of England preserve it from its laws. And they have substituted for our formal aristocracy an essential aristocracy; the government of those who are distinguished by their fellow-citizens.'

'But then it would appear,' said Coningsby, 'that the remedial action of our manners has removed all the political and social evils of which you complain?'

'They have created a power that may remove them; a power that has the capacity to remove them. But in a great measure they still exist, and must exist yet, I fear, for a long time. The growth of our civilisation has ever been as slow as our oaks; but this tardy development is preferable to the temporary expansion of the gourd.'

'The future seems to me sometimes a dark cloud.'

'Not to me,' said Mr. Millbank. 'I am sanguine; I am the disciple of progress. But I have cause for my faith. I have witnessed advance. My father has often told me that in his early days the displeasure of a peer of England was like a sentence of death to a man. Why, it was esteemed a great concession to public opinion, so late as the reign of George II.,

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that Lord Ferrars should be executed for murder. The king of a new dynasty, who wished to be popular with the people, insisted on it, and even then he was hanged with a silken cord. At any rate we may defend ourselves now,' continued Mr. Millbank, 'and, perhaps, do something more. I defy any peer to crush me, though there is one who would be very glad to do it. No more of that; I am very happy to see you at Millbank, very happy to make your acquaintance,' he continued, with some emotion, 'and not merely because you are my son's friend and more than friend.'

The walls of the dining-room were covered with pictures of great merit, all of the modern English school. Mr. Millbank understood no other, he was wont to say! and he found that many of his friends who did, bought a great many pleasing pictures that were copies, and many originals that were very displeasing. He loved a fine free landscape by Lee, that gave him the broad plains, the green lanes, and running streams of his own land; a group of animals by Landseer, as full of speech and sentiment as if they were designed by Æsop; above all, he delighted in the household humour and homely pathos of Wilkie. And if a higher tone of imagination pleased him, he could gratify it without difficulty among his favourite masters. He possessed some specimens of Etty worthy of Venice when it was alive; he could muse amid the twilight ruins of ancient cities raised by the magic pencil of Danby, or accompany a group of fair Neapolitans to a festival by the genial aid of Uwins.

Opposite Coningsby was a portrait, which had greatly attracted his attention during the whole dinner. It represented a woman, young and of a

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rare beauty. The costume was of that classical character prevalent in this country before the general peace; a blue ribbon bound together as a fillet her clustering chestnut curls. The face was looking out of the canvass, and Coningsby never raised his eyes without catching its glance of blended vivacity and tenderness.

There are moments when our sensibility is affected by circumstances of a trivial character. It seems a fantastic emotion, but the gaze of this picture disturbed the serenity of Coningsby. He endeavoured sometimes to avoid looking at it, but it irresistibly attracted him. More than once during dinner he longed to inquire whom it represented; but it is a delicate subject to ask questions about portraits, and he refrained. Still, when he was rising to leave the room, the impulse was irresistible. He said to Mr. Millbank, 'By whom is that portrait, sir?'

The countenance of Millbank became disturbed; it was not an expression of tender reminiscence that fell upon his features. On the contrary, the expression was agitated, almost angry.

'Oh! that is by a country artist,' he said, 'of whom you never heard,' and moved away.

They found Miss Millbank in the drawing-room; she was sitting at a round table covered with working materials, apparently dressing a doll.

'Nay,' thought Coningsby, 'she must be too old for that.'

He addressed her, and seated himself by her side. There were several dolls on the table, but he discovered, on examination, that they were pincushions; and elicited, with some difficulty, that they were making for a fancy fair about to be held in aid of

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that excellent institution, the Manchester Athenæum. Then the father came up and said,

'My child, let us have some tea;' and she rose and seated herself at the tea-table. Coningsby also quitted his seat, and surveyed the apartment.

There were several musical instruments; among others, he observed a guitar; not such an instrument as one buys in a music shop, but such an one as tinkles at Seville, a genuine Spanish guitar. Coningsby repaired to the tea-table.

'I am glad that you are fond of music, Miss Millbank.'

A blush and a bow.

'I hope after tea you will be so kind as to touch the guitar.'

Signals of great distress.

'Were you ever at Birmingham?'

'Yes:' a sigh.

'What a splendid music-hall! They should build one at Manchester.'

'They ought,' in a whisper.

The tea-tray was removed; Coningsby was conversing with Mr. Millbank, who was asking him questions about his son; what he thought of Oxford; what he thought of Oriel; should himself have preferred Cambridge; but had consulted a friend, an Oriel man, who had a great opinion of Oriel; and Oswald's name had been entered some years back. He rather regretted it now; but the thing was done. Coningsby, remembering the promise of the guitar, turned round to claim its fulfilment, but the singer had made her escape. Time elapsed, and no Miss Millbank reappeared. Coningsby looked at his watch; he had to go three miles to the train, which started,

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as his friend of the previous night would phrase it, at 9.45.

'I should be happy if you remained with us,' said Mr. Millbank; 'but as you say it is out of your power, in this age of punctual travelling a host is bound to speed the parting guest. The carriage is ready for you.'

'Farewell, then, sir. You must make my adieux to Miss Millbank, and accept my thanks for your great kindness.'

'Farewell, Mr. Coningsby,' said his host, taking his hand, which he retained for a moment, as if he would say more. Then leaving it, he repeated with a somewhat wandering air, and in a voice of emotion, 'Farewell, farewell, Mr. Coningsby.'

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CHAPTER XXVII.

Coningsby Castle.

TOWARDS the end of the session of 1836, the hopes of the Conservative party were again in the ascendant. The Tadpoles and the Tapers had infused such enthusiasm into all the country attorneys, who, in their turn, had so bedeviled the registration, that it was whispered in the utmost confidence, but as a flagrant truth, that reaction was at length 'a great fact.' All that was required was the opportunity; but as the existing parliament was not two years old, and the government had an excellent working majority, it seemed that the occasion could scarcely be furnished. Under these circumstances, the backstairs politicians, not content with having by their premature movements already seriously damaged the career of their leader, to whom in public they pretended to be devoted, began weaving again their old intrigues about the court, and not without effect.

It was said that the royal ear lent itself with no marked repugnance to suggestions which might rid the sovereign of ministers, who, after all, were the ministers not of his choice, but of his necessity. But

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William IV., after two failures in a similar attempt, after his respective embarrassing interviews with Lord Grey and Lord Melbourne, on their return to office in 1832 and 1835, was resolved never to make another move unless it were a checkmate. The king, therefore, listened and smiled, and loved to talk to his favourites of his private feelings and secret hopes; the first outraged, the second cherished; and a little of these revelations of royalty was distilled to great personages, who in their turn spoke hypothetically to their hangers-on of royal dispositions, and possible contingencies, while the hangers-on and go-betweens, in their turn, looked more than they expressed; took county members by the button into a corner, and advised, as friends, the representatives of boroughs to look sharply after the next registration.

Lord Monmouth, who was never greater than in adversity, and whose favourite excitement was to aim at the impossible, had never been more resolved on a dukedom than when the Reform Act deprived him of the twelve votes which he had accumulated to attain that object. While all his companions in discomfiture were bewailing their irretrievable overthrow, Lord Monmouth became almost a convert to the measure, which had furnished his devising and daring mind, palled with prosperity, and satiated with a life of success, with an object, and the stimulating enjoyment of a difficulty.

He had early resolved to appropriate to himself a division of the county in which his chief seat was situate; but what most interested him, because it was most difficult, was the acquisition of one of the new boroughs that was in his vicinity, and in which he possessed considerable property. The borough, how-

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ever, was a manufacturing town, and returning only one member, it had hitherto sent up to Westminster a radical shopkeeper, one Mr. Jawster Sharp, who had taken what is called 'a leading part' in the town in every 'crisis' that had occurred since 1830; one of those zealous patriots who had got up penny subscriptions for gold cups to Lord Grey; cries for the bill, the whole bill, and nothing but the bill; and public dinners where the victual was devoured before grace was said; a worthy who makes speeches, passes resolutions, votes addresses, goes up with deputations, has at all times the necessary quantity of confidence in the necessary individual; confidence in Lord Grey; confidence in Lord Durham; confidence in Lord Melbourne: and can also, if necessary, give three cheers for the King, or three groans for the Queen.

But the days of the genus Jawster Sharp were over in this borough as well as in many others. He had contrived in his lustre of agitation to feather his nest pretty successfully; by which he had lost public confidence and gained his private end. Three hungry Jawster Sharps, his hopeful sons, had all become commissioners of one thing or another; temporary appointments with interminable duties; a Low-Church son-in-law found himself comfortably seated in a chancellor's living; and several cousins and nephews were busy in the excise. But Jawster Sharp himself was as pure as Cato. He had always said he would never touch the public money, and he had kept his word. It was an understood thing that Jawster Sharp was never to show his face again on the hustings of Darlford; the Liberal party was determined to be represented in future by a man of station, substance, character, a true Reformer, but one who wanted

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nothing for himself, and therefore might, if needful, get something for them. They were looking out for such a man, but were in no hurry. The seat was looked upon as a good thing; a contest certainly, every place is contested now, but as certainly a large majority. Notwithstanding all this confidence, however, reaction or registration, or some other mystification, had produced effects even in this creature of the Reform Bill, the good borough of Darlford. The borough that out of gratitude to Lord Grey returned a jobbing shopkeeper twice to Parliament as its representative without a contest, had now a Conservative Association, with a banker for its chairman, and a brewer for its vice-president, and four sharp lawyers nibbing their pens, noting their memorandum-books, and assuring their neighbours, with a consoling and complacent air, that 'Property must tell in the long run.' Whispers also were about that when the proper time arrived a Conservative candidate would certainly have the honour of addressing the electors. No name mentioned, but it was not concealed that he was to be of no ordinary calibre; a tried man, a distinguished individual, who had already fought the battle of the constitution, and served his country in eminent posts; honoured by the nation, favoured by his sovereign. These important and encouraging intimations were ably diffused in the columns of the Conservative journal, and in a style which, from its high tone, evidently indicated no ordinary source and no common pen. Indeed, there appeared occasionally in this paper, articles written with such unusual vigour, that the proprietors of the Liberal journal almost felt the necessity of getting some eminent hand down from town to compete with

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them. It was impossible that they could emanate from the rival editor. They knew well the length of their brother's tether. Had they been more versant in the periodical literature of the day, they might in this 'slashing' style have caught perhaps a glimpse of the future candidate for their borough, the Right Honourable Nicholas Rigby.

Lord Monmouth, though he had been absent from England since 1832, had obtained from his vigilant correspondent a current knowledge of all that had occurred in the interval: all the hopes, fears, plans, prospects, manœuvres, and machinations; their rise and fall; how some had bloomed, others were blighted; not a shade of reaction that was not represented to him; not the possibility of an adhesion that was not duly reported; he could calculate at Naples at any time, within ten, the result of a dissolution. The season of the year had prevented him crossing the Alps in 1834, and after the general election he was too shrewd a practiser in the political world to be deceived as to the ultimate result. Lord Eskdale, in whose judgment he had more confidence than in that of any individual, had told him from the first that the pear was not ripe; Rigby, who always hedged against his interest by the fulfilment of his prophecy of irremediable discomfiture, was never very sanguine. Indeed, the whole affair was always considered premature by the good judges; and a long time elapsed before Tadpole and Taper recovered their secret influence, or resumed their ostentatious loquacity, or their silent insolence.

The pear, however, was now ripe. Even Lord Eskdale wrote that after the forthcoming registration a bet was safe, and Lord Monmouth had the satisfac-

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tion of drawing the Whig Minister at Naples into a cool thousand on the event. Soon after this he returned to England, and determined to pay a visit to Coningsby Castle, feast the county, patronise the borough, diffuse that confidence in the party which his presence never failed to do; so great and so just was the reliance in his unerring powers of calculation and his intrepid pluck. Notwithstanding Schedule A, the prestige of his power had not sensibly diminished, for his essential resources were vast, and his intellect always made the most of his influence.

True, however, to his organisation, Lord Monmouth, even to save his party and gain his dukedom, must not be bored. He, therefore, filled his castle with the most agreeable people from London, and even secured for their diversion a little troupe of French comedians. Thus supported, he received his neighbours with all the splendour befitting his immense wealth and great position, and with one charm which even immense wealth and great position cannot command, the most perfect manner in the world. Indeed, Lord Monmouth was one of the most finished gentlemen that ever lived; and as he was good-natured, and for a selfish man even good-humoured, there was rarely a cloud of caprice or ill-temper to prevent his fine manners having their fair play. The country neighbours were all fascinated; they were received with so much dignity and dismissed with so much grace. Nobody would believe a word of the stories against him. Had he lived all his life at Coningsby, fulfilled every duty of a great English nobleman, benefited the county, loaded the inhabitants with favours, he would not have been half so popular as he found himself within a fortnight of his arrival

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with the worst county reputation conceivable, and every little squire vowing that he would not even leave his name at the Castle to show his respect.

Lord Monmouth,—whose contempt for mankind was absolute; not a fluctuating sentiment, not a mournful conviction, ebbing and flowing with circumstances, but a fixed, profound, unalterable instinct; who never loved any one, and never hated any one except his own children—was diverted by his popularity, but he was also gratified by it. At this moment it was a great element of power; he was proud that, with a vicious character, after having treated these people with unprecedented neglect and contumely, he should have won back their golden opinions in a moment by the magic of manner and the splendour of wealth. His experience proved the soundness of his philosophy.

Lord Monmouth worshipped gold, though, if necessary, he could squander it like a caliph. He had even a respect for very rich men; it was his only weakness, the only exception to his general scorn for his species. Wit, power, particular friendships, general popularity, public opinion, beauty, genius, virtue, all these are to be purchased; but it does not follow that you can buy a rich man: you may not be able or willing to spare enough. A person or a thing that you perhaps could not buy, became invested, in the eyes of Lord Monmouth, with a kind of halo amounting almost to sanctity.

As the prey rose to the bait, Lord Monmouth resolved they should be gorged. His banquets were doubled; a ball was announced; a public day fixed; not only the county, but the principal inhabitants of the neighbouring borough, were encouraged to attend; Lord Monmouth wished it, if possible, to be without

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distinction of party. He had come to reside among his old friends, to live and die where he was born. The Chairman of the Conservative Association and the Vice-President exchanged glances which would have become Tadpole and Taper; the four attorneys nibbed their pens with increased energy, and vowed that nothing could withstand the influence of the aristocracy 'in the long run.' All went and dined at the Castle; all returned home overpowered by the condescension of the host, the beauty of the ladies, several real Princesses, the splendour of his liveries, the variety of his viands, and the flavour of his wines. It was agreed that at future meetings of the Conservative Association they should always give 'Lord Monmouth and the House of Lords!' superseding the Duke of Wellington, who was to figure in an after-toast with the Battle of Waterloo.

It was not without emotion that Coningsby beheld for the first time the castle that bore his name. It was visible for several miles before he even entered the park, so proud and prominent was its position, on the richly-wooded steep of a considerable eminence. It was a castellated building, immense and magnificent, in a faulty and incongruous style of architecture, indeed, but compensating in some degree for these deficiencies of external taste and beauty by the splendour and accommodation of its interior, which a Gothic castle, raised according to the strict rules of art, could scarcely have afforded. The declining sun threw over the pile a rich colour as Coningsby approached it, and lit up with fleeting and fanciful tints the delicate foliage of the rare shrubs and tall thin trees that clothed the acclivity on which it stood. Our young friend felt a little embarrassed

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when, without a servant and in a hack chaise, he drew up to the grand portal, and a crowd of retainers came forth to receive him. A superior servant inquired his name with a stately composure that disdained to be supercilious. It was not without some degree of pride and satisfaction that the guest replied, 'Mr. Coningsby.' The instantaneous effect was magical. It seemed to Coningsby that he was borne on the shoulders of the people to his apartment; each tried to carry some part of his luggage; and he only hoped his welcome from their superiors might be as hearty.

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CHAPTER XXVIII.

A Courtly Welcome.

T APPEARED to Coningsby in his way to his room that the Castle was in a state of great excitement; everywhere bustle, preparation, moving to and fro, ascending and descending of stairs, servants in every corner; orders boundlessly given, rapidly obeyed; many desires, equal gratification. All this made him rather nervous. It was quite unlike Beaumanoir. That also was a palace, but it was a home. This, though it should be one to him, seemed to have nothing of that character. Of all mysteries the social mysteries are the most appalling. Going to an assembly for the first time is more alarming than the first battle. Coningsby had never before been in a great house full of company. It seemed an overwhelming affair. The sight of the servants bewildered him; how, then, was he to encounter their masters?

That, however, he must do in a moment. A groom of the chambers indicates the way to him, as he proceeds with a hesitating yet hurried step through several ante-chambers and drawing-rooms; then doors are suddenly thrown open, and he is ushered into the

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largest and most sumptuous saloon that he had ever entered. It was full of ladies and gentlemen. Coningsby for the first time in his life was at a great party. His immediate emotion was to sink into the earth; but perceiving that no one even noticed him, and that not an eye had been attracted to his entrance, he regained his breath and in some degree his composure, and standing aside, endeavoured to make himself, as well as he could, master of the land.

Not a human being that he had ever seen before! The circumstance of not being noticed, which a few minutes since he had felt as a relief, became now a cause of annoyance. It seemed that he was the only person standing alone whom no one was addressing. He felt renewed and aggravated embarrassment, and fancied, perhaps was conscious, that he was blushing. At length his ear caught the voice of Mr. Rigby. The speaker was not visible; he was at a distance surrounded by a wondering group, whom he was severally and collectively contradicting, but Coningsby could not mistake those harsh, arrogant tones. He was not sorry indeed that Mr. Rigby did not observe him. Coningsby never loved him particularly, which was rather ungrateful, for he was a person who had been kind, and, on the whole, serviceable to him; but Coningsby writhed, especially as he grew older, under Mr. Rigby's patronising air and paternal tone. Even in old days, though attentive, Coningsby had never found him affectionate. Mr. Rigby would tell him what to do and see, but never asked him what he wished to do and see. It seemed to Coningsby that it was always contrived that he should appear the *protégé,* or poor relation, of a dependent of his family. These feelings, which the thought of Mr.

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Rigby had revived, caused our young friend, by an inevitable association of ideas, to remember that, unknown and unnoticed as he might be, he was the only Coningsby in that proud Castle except the Lord of the Castle himself; and he began to be rather ashamed of permitting a sense of his inexperience in the mere forms and fashions of society so to oppress him, and deprive him, as it were, of the spirit and carriage which became alike his character and his position. Emboldened and greatly restored to himself, Coningsby advanced into the body of the saloon.

On his legs, wearing his blue ribbon and bending his head frequently to a lady who was seated on a sofa, and continually addressed him, Coningsby recognised his grandfather. Lord Monmouth was somewhat balder than four years ago, when he had come down to Montem, and a little more portly perhaps; but otherwise unchanged. Lord Monmouth never condescended to the artifices of the toilet, and, indeed, notwithstanding his life of excess, had little need of them. Nature had done much for him, and the slow progress of decay was carried off by his consummate bearing. He looked, indeed, the chieftain of a house of whom a cadet might be proud.

For Coningsby, not only the chief of his house, but his host too. In either capacity he ought to address Lord Monmouth. To sit down to dinner without having previously paid his respects to his grandfather, to whom he was so much indebted, and whom he had not seen for so many years, struck him not only as uncourtly, but as unkind and ungrateful, and, indeed, in the highest degree absurd. But how was he to do it? Lord Monmouth seemed deeply engaged, and apparently with some very great

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lady. And if Coningsby advanced and bowed, in all probability he would only get a bow in return. He remembered the bow of his first interview. It had made a lasting impression on his mind. For it was more than likely Lord Monmouth would not recognise him. Four years had not sensibly altered Lord Monmouth, but four years had changed Harry Coningsby from a schoolboy into a man. Then how was he to make himself known to his grandfather? To announce himself as Coningsby, as his Lordship's grandson, seemed somewhat ridiculous: to address his grandfather as Lord Monmouth would serve no purpose: to style Lord Monmouth 'grandfather' would make every one laugh, and seemed stiff and unnatural. What was he to do? To fall into an attitude and exclaim, 'Behold your grandchild!' or, 'Have you forgotten your Harry?'

Even to catch Lord Monmouth's glance was not an easy affair; he was much occupied on one side by the great lady, on the other were several gentlemen who occasionally joined in the conversation. But something must be done.

There ran through Coningsby's character, as we have before mentioned, a vein of simplicity which was not its least charm. It resulted, no doubt, in a great degree from the earnestness of his nature. There never was a boy so totally devoid of affectation, which was remarkable, for he had a brilliant imagination, a quality that, from its fantasies, and the vague and indefinite desires it engenders, generally makes those whose characters are not formed, affected. The Duchess, who was a fine judge of character, and who greatly regarded Coningsby, often mentioned this trait as one which, combined with his great

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abilities and acquirements so unusual at his age, rendered him very interesting. In the present instance it happened that, while Coningsby was watching his grandfather, he observed a gentleman advance, make his bow, say and receive a few words and retire. This little incident, however, made a momentary diversion in the immediate circle of Lord Monmouth, and before they could all resume their former talk and fall into their previous positions, an impulse sent forth Coningsby, who walked up to Lord Monmouth, and standing before him, said,

'How do you do, grandpapa?'

Lord Monmouth beheld his grandson. His comprehensive and penetrating glance took in every point with a flash. There stood before him one of the handsomest youths he had ever seen, with a mien as graceful as his countenance was captivating; and his whole air breathing that freshness and ingenuousness which none so much appreciates as the used man of the world. And this was his child; the only one of his blood to whom he had been kind. It would be exaggeration to say that Lord Monmouth's heart was touched; but his good nature effervesced, and his fine taste was deeply gratified. He perceived in an instant such a relation might be a valuable adherent; an irresistible candidate for future elections: a brilliant tool to work out the dukedom. All these impressions and ideas, and many more, passed through the quick brain of Lord Monmouth ere the sound of Coningsby's words had seemed to cease, and long before the surrounding guests had recovered from the surprise which they had occasioned them, and which did not diminish, when Lord Monmouth, advancing, placed his arms round Coningsby with a dignity of

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on that would have become Louis XIV., and
n the high manner of the old Court, kissed
ı each cheek.

elcome to your home,' said Lord Monmouth.
ıave grown a great deal.'

n Lord Monmouth led the agitated Coningsby
great lady, who was a Princess and an Am-
ess, and then, placing his arm gracefully in
his grandson, he led him across the room,
esented him in due form to some royal blood
as his guest, in the shape of a Russian Grand

His Imperial Highness received our hero as
ısly as the grandson of Lord Monmouth might
; but no greeting can be imagined warmer than
e he received from the lady with whom the
Duke was conversing. She was a dame whose
was mature, but still radiant. Her figure was
; her dark hair crowned with a tiara of curious
ıanship. Her rounded arm was covered with
bracelets, but not a jewel on her finely formed
ınd the least possible rouge on her still oval

Madame Colonna retained her charms.

e party, though so considerable, principally con-
of the guests at the Castle. The suite of the
Duke included several counts and generals;
there were the Russian Ambassador and his
and a Russian Prince and Princess, their rela-

The Prince and Princess Colonna and the
ss Lucretia were also paying a visit to the Mar-
; and the frequency of these visits made some
nt-laced magnificoes mysteriously declare it was
sible to go to Coningsby; but as they were not asked, it did not much signify. The Marquess knew a great many very agreeable people of the highest

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ton, who took a more liberal view of human conduct, and always made it a rule to presume the best motives instead of imputing the worst. There was Lady St. Julians, for example, whose position was of the highest; no one more sought; she made it a rule to go everywhere and visit everybody, provided they had power, wealth, and fashion. She knew no crime except a woman not living with her husband; that was past pardon. So long as his presence sanctioned her conduct, however shameless, it did not signify; but if the husband were a brute, neglected his wife first, and then deserted her; then, if a breath but sullies her name she must be crushed; unless, indeed, her own family were very powerful, which makes a difference, and sometimes softens immorality into indiscretion.

Lord and Lady Gaverstock were also there, who never said an unkind thing of anybody; her ladyship was pure as snow; but her mother having been divorced she ever fancied she was paying a kind of homage to her parent by visiting those who might some day be in the same predicament. There were other lords and ladies of high degree; and some who, though neither lords nor ladies, were charming people, which Lord Monmouth chiefly cared about; troops of fine gentlemen who came and went; and some who were neither fine nor gentlemen, but who were very amusing or very obliging, as circumstances required, and made life easy and pleasant to others and themselves.

A new scene this for Coningsby, who watched with interest all that passed before him. The dinner was announced as served; an affectionate arm guides him at a moment of some perplexity.

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'When did you arrive, Harry? We shall sit together. How is the Duchess?' inquired Mr. Rigby, who spoke as if he had seen Coningsby for the first time; but who indeed had, with that eye which nothing could escape, observed his reception by his grandfather, marked it well, and inwardly digested it.

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CHAPTER XXIX.

La Petite Flora.

THERE was to be a first appearance on the stage of Lord Monmouth's theatre to-night, the expectation of which created considerable interest in the party, and was one of the principal subjects of conversation at dinner. Villebecque, the manager of the troupe, had married the actress Stella, once celebrated for her genius and her beauty; a woman who had none of the vices of her craft, for, though she was a fallen angel, there were what her countrymen style extenuating circumstances in her declension. With the whole world at her feet, she had remained unsullied. Wealth and its enjoyments could not tempt her, although she was unable to refuse her heart to one whom she deemed worthy of possessing it. She found her fate in an Englishman, who was the father of her only child, a daughter. She thought she had met in him a hero, a demi-god, a being of deep passion and original and creative mind; but he was only a voluptuary, full of violence instead of feeling, and eccentric, because he had great means with which he could

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gratify extravagant whims. Stella found she had made the great and irretrievable mistake. She had exchanged devotion for a passionate and evanescent fancy, prompted at first by vanity, and daily dissipating under the influence of custom and new objects. Though not stainless in conduct, Stella was pure in spirit. She required that devotion which she had yielded; and she separated herself from the being to whom she had made the most precious sacrifice. He offered her the consoling compensation of a settlement, which she refused; and she returned with a broken spirit to that profession of which she was still the ornament and the pride.

The animating principle of her career was her daughter, whom she educated with a solicitude which the most virtuous mother could not surpass. To preserve her from the stage, and to secure for her an independence, were the objects of her mother's life; but nature whispered to her, that the days of that life were already numbered. The exertions of her profession had alarmingly developed an inherent tendency to pulmonary disease. Anxious that her child should not be left without some protector, Stella yielded to the repeated solicitations of one who from the first had been her silent admirer, and she married Villebecque, a clever actor, and an enterprising man who meant to be something more. Their union was not of long duration, though it was happy on the side of Villebecque, and serene on that of his wife. Stella was recalled from this world, where she had known much triumph and more suffering; and where she had exercised many virtues, which elsewhere, though not here, may perhaps be accepted as some palliation of one great error.

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Villebecque acted becomingly to the young charge which Stella had bequeathed to him. He was himself, as we have intimated, a man of enterprise, a restless spirit, not content to move for ever in the sphere in which he was born. Vicissitudes are the lot of such aspirants. Villebecque became manager of a small theatre, and made money. If Villebecque without a sou had been a schemer, Villebecque with a small capital was the very Chevalier Law of theatrical managers. He took a larger theatre, and even that succeeded. Soon he was recognised as the lessee of more than one, and still he prospered. Villebecque began to dabble in opera-houses. He enthroned himself at Paris; his envoys were heard of at Milan and Naples, at Berlin and St. Petersburg. His controversies with the Conservatoire at Paris ranked among state papers. Villebecque rolled in chariots and drove cabriolets; Villebecque gave refined suppers to great nobles, who were honoured by the invitation; Villebecque wore a red ribbon in the buttonhole of his frock, and more than one cross in his gala dress.

All this time the daughter of Stella increased in years and stature, and we must add in goodness: a mild, soft-hearted girl, as yet with no decided character, but one who loved calmness and seemed little fitted for the circle in which she found herself. In that circle, however, she ever experienced kindness and consideration. No enterprise however hazardous, no management however complicated, no schemes however vast, ever for a moment induced Villebecque to forget 'La Petite.' If only for one breathless instant, hardly a day elapsed but he saw her; she was his companion in all his rapid movements, and he

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studied every comfort and convenience that could relieve her delicate frame in some degree from the inconvenience and exhaustion of travel. He was proud to surround her with luxury and refinement; to supply her with the most celebrated masters; to gratify every wish that she could express.

But all this time Villebecque was dancing on a volcano. The catastrophe which inevitably occurs in the career of all great speculators, and especially theatrical ones, arrived to him. Flushed with his prosperity, and confident in his constant success, nothing would satisfy him but universal empire. He had established his despotism at Paris, his dynasties at Naples and at Milan; but the North was not to him, and he was determined to appropriate it. Berlin fell before a successful campaign, though a costly one; but St. Petersburg and London still remained. Resolute and reckless, nothing deterred Villebecque. One season all the opera-houses in Europe obeyed his nod, and at the end of it he was ruined. The crash was utter, universal, overwhelming; and under ordinary circumstances a French bed and a brasier of charcoal alone remained for Villebecque, who was equal to the occasion. But the thought of La Petite and the remembrance of his promise to Stella deterred him from the deed. He reviewed his position in a spirit becoming a practical philosopher. Was he worse off than before he commenced his career? Yes, because he was older; though to be sure he had his compensating reminiscences. But was he too old to do anything? At forty-five the game was not altogether up; and in a large theatre, not too much lighted, and with the artifices of a dramatic toilet, he might still be able successfully to re-assume those characters of

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coxcombs and muscadins, in which he was once so celebrated. Luxury had perhaps a little too much enlarged his waist, but diet and rehearsals would set all right.

Villebecque in their adversity broke to La Petite that the time had unfortunately arrived when it would be wise for her to consider the most effectual means for turning her talents and accomplishments to account. He himself suggested the stage, to which otherwise there were doubtless objections, because her occupation in any other pursuit would necessarily separate them; but he impartially placed before her the relative advantages and disadvantages of every course which seemed to lie open to them, and left the preferable one to her own decision. La Petite, who had wept very much over Villebecque's misfortunes, and often assured him that she cared for them only for his sake, decided for the stage, solely because it would secure their not being parted; and yet, as she often assured him, she feared she had no predisposition for the career.

Villebecque had now not only to fill his own parts at the theatre at which he had obtained an engagement, but he had also to be the instructor of his ward. It was a life of toil; an addition of labour and effort that need scarcely have been made to the exciting exertion of performance, and the dull exercise of rehearsal; but he bore it all without a murmur; with a self-command and a gentle perseverance which the finest temper in the world could hardly account for; certainly not when we remember that its possessor, who had to make all these exertions and endure all this wearisome toil, had just experienced the most shattering vicissitudes of fortune, and been

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hurled from the possession of absolute power and illimitable self-gratification.

Lord Eskdale, who was always doing kind things to actors and actresses, had a great regard for Villebecque, with whom he had often supped. He had often been kind, too, to La Petite. Lord Eskdale had a plan for putting Villebecque, as he termed it, 'on his legs again.' It was to establish him with a French company in London at some pretty theatre; Lord Eskdale to take a private box and to make all his friends do the same. Villebecque, who was as sanguine as he was good-tempered, was ravished by this friendly scheme. He immediately believed that he should recover his great fortunes as rapidly as he had lost them. He foresaw in La Petite a genius as distinguished as that of her mother, although as yet not developed, and he was boundless in his expressions of gratitude to his patron. And indeed of all friends, a friend in need is the most delightful. Lord Eskdale had the talent of being a friend in need. Perhaps it was because he knew so many worthless persons. But it often happens that worthless persons are merely people who are worth nothing.

Lord Monmouth having written to Mr. Rigby of his intention to reside for some months at Coningsby, and having mentioned that he wished a troupe of French comedians to be engaged for the summer, Mr. Rigby had immediately consulted Lord Eskdale on the subject, as the best current authority. Thinking this a good opportunity of giving a turn to poor Villebecque, and that it might serve as a capital introduction to their scheme of the London company, Lord Eskdale obtained for him the engagement.

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CHAPTER XXX.

Mrs. Guy Flouncey.

HE guests re-assembled in the great saloon before they repaired to the theatre. A lady on the arm of the Russian Prince bestowed on Coningsby a haughty, but not ungracious, bow; which he returned, unconscious of the person to whom he bent. She was, however, a striking person; not beautiful, her face, indeed, at the first glance was almost repulsive, yet it ever attracted a second gaze. A remarkable pallor distinguished her; her features had neither regularity nor expression; neither were her eyes fine; but her brow impressed you with an idea of power of no ordinary character or capacity. Her figure was as fine and commanding as her face was void of charm. Juno, in the full bloom of her immortality, could have presented nothing more majestic. Coningsby watched her as she swept along like a resistless Fate.

Servants now went round and presented to each of the guests a billet of the performance. It announced in striking characters the *début* of Mademoiselle Flora. A principal servant, bearing branch lights,

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came forward and bowed to the Marquess. Lord Monmouth went immediately to the Grand Duke, and notified to His Imperial Highness that the comedy was ready. The Grand Duke offered his arm to the Ambassadress; the rest were following; Coningsby was called; Madame Colonna wished him to be her beau.

It was a pretty theatre; had been rapidly rubbed up and renovated here and there; the painting just touched; a little gilding on a cornice. There were no boxes, but the ground-floor, which gradually ascended, was carpeted and covered with arm-chairs, and the back of the theatre had a new and rich curtain of green velvet.

They are all seated; a great artist performs on the violin, accompanied by another great artist on the piano. The lights rise; somebody evidently crosses the stage behind the curtain. They are disposing the scene. In a moment the curtain will rise also.

'Have you seen Lucretia?' said the Princess to Coningsby. 'She is so anxious to resume her acquaintance with you.'

But before he could answer the bell rang, and the curtain rose.

The old man, who had a droll part to-night, came forward and maintained a conversation with his housekeeper; not bad. The young woman who played the grave matron performed with great finish. She was a favourite, and was ever applauded. The second scene came; a saloon tastefully furnished; a table with flowers, arranged with grace; birds in cages, a lap-dog on a cushion; some books. The audience were pleased; especially the ladies; they like to recognise signs of *bon ton* in the details of the scene.

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A rather awful pause, and Mademoiselle Flora enters. She is greeted with even vehement approbation. Her agitation is extreme; she curtseys and bows her head, as if to hide her face. The face was pleasing, and pretty enough, soft and engaging. Her figure slight and rather graceful. Nothing could be more perfect than her costume; purely white, but the fashion consummate; a single rose her only ornament. All admitted that her hair was arranged to admiration.

At length she spoke; her voice trembled, but she had a good elocution, though her organ wanted force. The gentlemen looked at each other, and nodded approbation. There was something so unobtrusive in her mien, that she instantly became a favourite with the ladies. The scene was not long, but it was successful.

Flora did not appear in the next scene. In the fourth and final one of the act, she had to make a grand display. It was a love-scene, and rather of an impassioned character; Villebecque was her suitor. He entered first on the stage. Never had he looked so well, or performed with more spirit. You would not have given him five-and-twenty years; he seemed redolent of youth. His dress, too, was admirable. He had studied the most distinguished of his audience for the occasion, and had outdone them all. The fact is, he had been assisted a little by a great connoisseur, a celebrated French nobleman, Count D'O——y, who had been one of the guests. The thing was perfect; and Lord Monmouth took a pinch of snuff, and tapped approbation on the top of his box.

Flora now re-appeared, received with renewed approbation. It did not seem, however, that in the interval she had gained courage; she looked agitated.

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She spoke, she proceeded with her part; it became impassioned. She had to speak of her feelings; to tell the secrets of her heart; to confess that she loved another; her emotion was exquisitely performed, the mournful tenderness of her tones thrilling. There was, throughout the audience, a dead silence; all were absorbed in their admiration of the unrivalled artist; all felt a new genius had visited the stage; but while they were fascinated by the actress, the woman was in torture. The emotion was the disturbance of her own soul; the mournful tenderness of her tones thrilled from the heart: suddenly she clasped her hands with all the exhaustion of woe; an expression of agony flitted over her countenance; and she burst into tears. Villebecque rushed forward, and carried, rather than led, her from the stage; the audience looking at each other, some of them suspecting that this movement was a part of the scene.

'She has talent,' said Lord Monmouth to the Russian Ambassadress, 'but wants practice. Villebecque should send her for a time to the provinces.'

At length M. Villebecque came forward to express his deep regret that the sudden and severe indisposition of Mlle. Flora rendered it impossible for the company to proceed with the piece; but that the curtain would descend to rise again for the second and last piece announced.

All this accordingly took place. The experienced performer who acted the heroines now came forward and disported most jocundly. The failure of Flora had given fresh animation to her perpetual liveliness. She seemed the very soul of elegant frolic. In the last scene she figured in male attire; and in air, fashion, and youth, beat Villebecque out of the field.

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She looked younger than Coningsby when he went up to his grandpapa.

The comedy was over, the curtain fell; the audience, much amused, chattered brilliant criticism, and quitted the theatre to repair to the saloon, where they were to be diverted to-night with Russian dances. Nobody thought of the unhappy Flora; not a single message to console her in her grief, to compliment her on what she had done, to encourage her future. And yet it was a season for a word of kindness; so, at least, thought one of the audience, as he lingered behind the hurrying crowd, absorbed in their coming amusements.

Coningsby had sat very near the stage; he had observed, with great advantage and attention, the countenance and movements of Flora from the beginning. He was fully persuaded that her woe was genuine and profound. He had felt his eyes moist when she wept. He recoiled from the cruelty and the callousness that, without the slightest symptom of sympathy, could leave a young girl who had been labouring for their amusement, and who was suffering for her trial.

He got on the stage, ran behind the scenes, and asked for Mlle. Flora. They pointed to a door; he requested permission to enter. Flora was sitting at a table, with her face resting on her hands. Villebecque was there, resting on the edge of the tall fender, and still in the dress in which he had performed in the last piece.

'I took the liberty,' said Coningsby, 'of inquiring after Mlle. Flora;' and then advancing to her, who had raised her head, he added, 'I am sure my grandfather must feel much indebted to you, Mademoiselle,

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for making such exertions when you were suffering under so much indisposition.'

'This is very amiable of you, sir,' said the young lady, looking at him with earnestness.

'Mademoiselle has too much sensibility,' said Villebecque, making an observation by way of diversion.

'And yet that must be the soul of fine acting,' said Coningsby; 'I look forward, all look forward, with great interest to the next occasion on which you will favour us.'

'Never!' said La Petite, in a plaintive tone; 'oh, I hope, never!'

'Mademoiselle is not aware at this moment,' said Coningsby, 'how much her talent is appreciated. I assure you, sir,' he added, turning to Villebecque, 'I heard but one opinion, but one expression of gratification at her feeling and her fine taste.'

'The talent is hereditary,' said Villebecque.

'Indeed you have reason to say so,' said Coningsby.

'Pardon; I was not thinking of myself. My child reminded me so much of another this evening. But that is nothing. I am glad you are here, sir, to reassure Mademoiselle.'

'I came only to congratulate her, and to lament, for our sakes as well as her own, her indisposition.'

'It is not indisposition,' said La Petite, in a low tone, with her eyes cast down.

'Mademoiselle cannot overcome the nervousness incidental to a first appearance,' said Villebecque.

'A last appearance,' said La Petite; 'yes, it must be the last.' She rose gently, she approached Villebecque, she laid her head on his breast, and placed her arms round his neck, 'My father, my best father, yes, say it is the last.'

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'You are the mistress of your lot, Flora,' said Villebecque; 'but with such a distinguished talent——'

'No, no, no; no talent. You are wrong, my father. I know myself. I am not of those to whom nature gives talents. I am born only for still life. I have no taste except for privacy. The convent is more suited to me than the stage.'

'But you hear what this gentleman says,' said Villebecque, returning her embrace. 'He tells you that his grandfather, my Lord Marquess, I believe, sir, that every one, that——'

'Oh, no, no, no!' said Flora, shaking her head. 'He comes here because he is generous, because he is a gentleman; and he wished to soothe the soul that he knew was suffering. Thank him, my father, thank him for me and before me, and promise in his presence that the stage and your daughter have parted for ever.'

'Nay, Mademoiselle,' said Coningsby, advancing and venturing to take her hand, a soft hand, 'make no such resolutions to-night. M. Villebecque can have no other thought or object but your happiness; and, believe me, 'tis not I only, but all, who appreciate, and, if they were here, must respect you.'

'I prefer respect to admiration,' said Flora; 'but I fear that respect is not the appanage of such as I am.'

'All must respect those who respect themselves,' said Coningsby. 'Adieu, Mademoiselle; I trust to-morrow to hear that you are yourself.' He bowed to Villebecque and retired.

In the meantime affairs in the drawing-room assumed a very different character from those behind the scenes. Coningsby returned to brilliancy, groups

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apparently gushing with light-heartedness, universal content, and Russian dances!

'And you too, do you dance the Russian dances, Mr. Coningsby?' said Madame Colonna.

'I cannot dance at all,' said Coningsby, beginning a little to lose his pride in the want of an accomplishment which at Eton he had thought it spirited to despise.

'Ah! you cannot dance the Russian dances! Lucretia shall teach you,' said the Princess; 'nothing will please her so much.'

On the present occasion the ladies were not so experienced in the entertainment as the gentlemen; but there was amusement in being instructed. To be disciplined by a Grand Duke or a Russian Princess was all very well; but what even the good-tempered Lady Gaythorpe could not pardon was, that a certain Mrs. Guy Flouncey, whom they were all of them trying to put down and to keep down, on this, as almost on every other occasion, proved herself a more finished performer than even the Russians themselves.

Lord Monmouth had picked up the Guy Flounceys during a Roman winter. They were people of some position in society. Mr. Guy Flouncey was a man of good estate, a sportsman, proud of his pretty wife. Mrs. Guy Flouncey was even very pretty, dressed in a style of ultra fashion. However, she could sing, dance, act, ride, and talk, and all well; and was mistress of the art of flirtation. She had amused the Marquess abroad, and had taken care to call at Monmouth House the instant the *Morning Post* apprised her he had arrived in England; the consequence was an invitation to Coningsby. She came with a wardrobe which, in point of variety, fancy, and fashion,

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never was surpassed. Morning and evening, every day a new dress equally striking; and a riding habit that was the talk and wonder of the whole neighbourhood. Mrs. Guy Flouncey created far more sensation in the borough when she rode down the High Street, than what the good people called the real Princesses.

At first the fine ladies never noticed her, or only stared at her over their shoulders; everywhere sounded, in suppressed whispers, the fatal question, 'Who is she?' After dinner they formed always into polite groups, from which Mrs. Guy Flouncey was invariably excluded; and if ever the Princess Colonna, impelled partly by good nature, and partly from having known her on the Continent, did kindly sit by her, Lady St. Julians, or some dame equally benevolent, was sure, by an adroit appeal to Her Highness on some point which could not be decided without moving, to withdraw her from her pretty and persecuted companion.

It was, indeed, rather difficult work the first few days for Mrs. Guy Flouncey, especially immediately after dinner. It is not soothing to one's self-love to find oneself sitting alone, pretending to look at prints, in a fine drawing-room, full of fine people who don't speak to you. But Mrs. Guy Flouncey, after having taken Coningsby Castle by storm, was not to be driven out of its drawing-room by the tactics even of a Lady St. Julians. Experience convinced her that all that was required was a little patience. Mrs. Guy had confidence in herself, her quickness, her ever ready accomplishments, and her practised powers of attraction. And she was right. She was always sure of an ally the moment the gentlemen appeared. The cavalier who had sat next to her at dinner was only too happy to meet her again. More than once, too,

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she had caught her noble host, though a whole garrison was ever on the watch to prevent her, and he was greatly amused, and showed that he was greatly amused, by her society. Then she suggested plans to him to divert his guests. In a country-house the suggestive mind is inestimable. Somehow or other, before a week was passed, Mrs. Guy Flouncey seemed the soul of everything, was always surrounded by a cluster of admirers, and with what are called 'the best men' ever ready to ride with her, dance with her, act with her, or fall at her feet. The fine ladies found it absolutely necessary to thaw: they began to ask her questions after dinner. Mrs. Guy Flouncey only wanted an opening. She was an adroit flatterer, with a temper imperturbable, and gifted with a ceaseless energy of conferring slight obligations. She lent them patterns for new fashions, in all which mysteries she was very versant; and what with some gentle glozing and some gay gossip, sugar for their tongues and salt for their tails, she contrived pretty well to catch them all.

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CHAPTER XXXI.

A Gay House Party.

OTHING could present a greater contrast than the respective interiors of Coningsby and Beaumanoir. That air of habitual habitation, which so pleasingly distinguished the Duke's family seat, was entirely wanting at Coningsby. Everything, indeed, was vast and splendid; but it seemed rather a gala-house than a dwelling; as if the grand furniture and the grand servants had all come down express from town with the grand company, and were to disappear and to be dispersed at the same time. And truly there were manifold traces of hasty and temporary arrangement; new carpets and old hangings; old paint, new gilding; battalions of odd French chairs, squadrons of queer English tables; and large tasteless lamps and tawdry chandeliers, evidently true cockneys, and only taking the air by way of change. There was, too, throughout the drawing-rooms an absence of all those minor articles of ornamental furniture that are the offering of taste to the home we love. There were no books, either; few flowers; no pet animals; no portfolios of fine drawings by our English artists like

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the album of the Duchess, full of sketches by Landseer and Stanfield, and their gifted brethren; not a print even, except portfolios of H. B.'s caricatures. The modes and manners of the house were not rural; there was nothing of the sweet order of a country life. Nobody came down to breakfast; the ladies were scarcely seen until dinner-time; they rolled about in carriages together late in the afternoon as if they were in London, or led a sort of factitious boudoir life in their provincial dressing-rooms.

The Marquess sent for Coningsby the morning after his arrival and asked him to breakfast with him in his private rooms. Nothing could be more kind or more agreeable than his grandfather. He appeared to be interested in his grandson's progress, was glad to find Coningsby had distinguished himself at Eton, solemnly adjured him not to neglect his French. A classical education, he said, was a very admirable thing, and one which all gentlemen should enjoy; but Coningsby would find some day that there were two educations, one which his position required, and another which was demanded by the world. 'French, my dear Harry,' he continued, 'is the key to this second education. In a couple of years or so you will enter the world; it is a different thing to what you read about. It is a masquerade; a motley, sparkling multitude, in which you may mark all forms and colours, and listen to all sentiments and opinions; but where all you see and hear has only one object, plunder. When you get into this crowd you will find that Greek and Latin are not so much diffused as you imagine. I was glad to hear you speaking French yesterday. Study your accent. There are a good many foreigners here with whom you may try your

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wing a little; don't talk to any of them too much. Be very careful of intimacies. All the people here are good acquaintance; at least pretty well. Now, here,' said the Marquess, taking up a letter and then throwing it on the table again, 'now here is a man whom I should like you to know, Sidonia. He will be here in a few days. Lay yourself out for him if you have the opportunity. He is a man of rare capacity, and enormously rich. No one knows the world like Sidonia. I never met his equal; and 'tis so pleasant to talk with one that can want nothing of you.'

Lord Monmouth had invited Coningsby to take a drive with him in the afternoon. The Marquess wished to show a part of his domain to the Ambassadress. Only Lucretia, he said, would be with them, and there was a place for him. This invitation was readily accepted by Coningsby, who was not yet sufficiently established in the habits of the house exactly to know how to pass his morning. His friend and patron, Mr. Rigby, was entirely taken up with the Grand Duke, whom he was accompanying all over the neighbourhood, in visits to manufactures, many of which Rigby himself saw for the first time, but all of which he fluently explained to his Imperial Highness. In return for this, he extracted much information from the Grand Duke on Russian plans and projects, materials for a 'slashing' article against the Russophobia that he was preparing, and in which he was to prove that Muscovite aggression was an English interest, and entirely to be explained by the want of sea-coast, which drove the Czar, for the pure purposes of commerce, to the Baltic and the Euxine.

When the hour for the drive arrived, Coningsby found Lucretia, a young girl when he had first seen

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her only four years back, and still his junior, in that majestic dame who had conceded a superb recognition to him the preceding eve. She really looked older than Madame Colonna, who, very beautiful, very young-looking, and mistress of the real arts of the toilet, those that cannot be detected, was not in the least altered since she first so cordially saluted Coningsby as her dear young friend at Monmouth House.

The day was delightful, the park extensive and picturesque, the Ambassadress sparkling with anecdote, and occasionally, in a low voice, breathing a diplomatic hint to Lord Monmouth, who bowed his graceful consciousness of her distinguished confidence. Coningsby occasionally took advantage of one of those moments, when the conversation ceased to be general, to address Lucretia, who replied in calm, fine smiles, and in affable monosyllables. She indeed generally succeeded in conveying an impression to those she addressed, that she had never seen them before, did not care to see them now, and never wished to see them again. And all this, too, with an air of great courtesy.

They arrived at the brink of a wooded bank; at their feet flowed a fine river, deep and rushing, though not broad; its opposite bank the boundary of a richly-timbered park.

'Ah! this is beautiful!' exclaimed the Ambassadress. 'And is that yours, Lord Monmouth?'

'Not yet,' said the Marquess. 'That is Hellingsley; it is one of the finest places in the county, with a splendid estate; not so considerable as Coningsby, but very great. It belongs to an old, a very old man, without a relative in the world. It is known that the estate will be sold at his death, which may be almost

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daily expected. Then it is mine. No one can offer for it what I can afford. For it gives me this division of the county, Princess. To possess Hellingsley is one of my objects.' The Marquess spoke with an animation unusual with him, almost with a degree of excitement.

The wind met them as they returned, the breeze blew rather freshly. Lucretia all of a sudden seemed touched with unusual emotion. She was alarmed lest Lord Monmouth should catch cold; she took a kerchief from her own well-turned throat to tie round his neck. He feebly resisted, evidently much pleased.

The Princess Lucretia was highly accomplished. In the evening, having refused several distinguished guests, but instantly yielding to the request of Lord Monmouth, she sang. It was impossible to conceive a contralto of more thrilling power, or an execution more worthy of the voice. Coningsby, who was not experienced in fine singing, listened as if to a supernatural lay, but all agreed it was of the highest class of nature and of art; and the Grand Duke was in raptures. Lucretia received even his Highness's compliments with a graceful indifference. Indeed, to those who watched her demeanour, it might be remarked that she seemed to yield to none, although all bowed before her.

Madame Colonna, who was always kind to Coningsby, expressed to him her gratification from the party of the morning. It must have been delightful, she assured Coningsby, for Lord Monmouth to have had both Lucretia and his grandson with him; and Lucretia too, she added, must have been so pleased.

Coningsby could not make out why Madame Colonna was always intimating to him that the Princess Lucretia took such great interest in his existence,

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looked forward with such gratification to his society, remembered with so much pleasure the past, anticipated so much happiness from the future. It appeared to him that he was to Lucretia, if not an object of repugnance, as he sometimes fancied, certainly one only of absolute indifference; but he said nothing. He had already lived long enough to know that it is unwise to wish everything explained.

In the meantime his life was agreeable. Every day, he found, added to his acquaintance. He was never without a companion to ride or to shoot with; and of riding Coningsby was very fond. His grandfather, too, was continually giving him good-natured turns, and making him of consequence in the Castle: so that all the guests were fully impressed with the importance of Lord Monmouth's grandson. Lady St. Julians pronounced him distinguished; the Ambassadress thought diplomacy should be his part, as he had a fine person and a clear brain; Madame Colonna spoke of him always as if she took intense interest in his career, and declared that she liked him almost as much as Lucretia did; the Russians persisted in always styling him 'the young Marquess,' notwithstanding the Ambassador's explanations; Mrs. Guy Flouncey made a dashing attack on him; but Coningsby remembered a lesson which Lady Everingham had graciously bestowed on him. He was not to be caught again easily. Besides, Mrs. Guy Flouncey laughed a little too much, and talked a little too loud.

As time flew on, there were changes of visitors, chiefly among the single men. At the end of the first week after Coningsby's arrival, Lord Eskdale appeared, bringing with him Lucian Gay; and soon after followed the Marquess of Beaumanoir and Mr. Melton.

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These were all heroes who, in their way, interested the ladies, and whose advent was hailed with general satisfaction. Even Lucretia would relax a little to Lord Eskdale. He was one of her oldest friends, and with a simplicity of manner which amounted almost to plainness, and with rather a cynical nonchalance in his carriage towards men, Lord Eskdale was invariably a favourite with women. To be sure, his station was eminent; he was noble, and very rich, and very powerful, and these are qualities which tell as much with the softer as the harsher sex; but there are individuals with all these qualities who are nevertheless unpopular with women. Lord Eskdale was easy, knew the world thoroughly, had no prejudices, and, above all, had a reputation for success. A reputation for success has as much influence with women as a reputation for wealth has with men. Both reputations may be, and often are, unjust; but we see persons daily make good fortunes by them all the same. Lord Eskdale was not an impostor; and though he might not have been so successful a man had he not been Lord Eskdale, still, thrown over by a revolution, he would have lighted on his legs.

The arrival of this nobleman was the occasion of giving a good turn to poor Flora. He went immediately to see his friend Villebecque and his troupe. Indeed it was a sort of society which pleased Lord Eskdale more than that which is deemed more refined. He was very sorry about 'La Petite;' but thought that everything would come right in the long run; and told Villebecque that he was glad to hear him well spoken of here, especially by the Marquess, who seemed to take to him. As for Flora, he was entirely

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against her attempting the stage again, at least for the present, but as she was a good musician, he suggested to the Princess Lucretia one night, that the subordinate aid of Flora might be of service to her, and permit her to favour her friends with some pieces which otherwise she must deny to them. This suggestion was successful; Flora was introduced occasionally, soon often, to their parties in the evening, and her performances were in every respect satisfactory. There was nothing to excite the jealousy of Lucretia either in her style or her person. And yet she sang well enough, and was a quiet, refined, retiring, by no means disagreeable person. She was the companion of Lucretia very often in the morning as well as in the illumined saloon; for the Princess was devoted to the art in which she excelled. This connexion on the whole contributed to the happiness of poor Flora. True it was, in the evening she often found herself sitting or standing alone and no one noticing her; she had no dazzling quality to attract men of fashion, who themselves love to worship ever the fashionable. Even their goddesses must be *à la mode*. But Coningsby never omitted an opportunity to show Flora some kindness under these circumstances. He always came and talked to her, and praised her singing, and would sometimes hand her refreshments and give her his arm if necessary. These slight attentions coming from the grandson of Lord Monmouth were for the world redoubled in their value, though Flora thought only of their essential kindness; all in character with that first visit which dwelt on the poor girl's memory, though it had long ago escaped that of her visitor. For in truth Con-

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ingsby had no other impulse for his conduct but kind-heartedness.

Thus we have attempted to give some faint idea how life glided away at the Castle the first fortnight that Coningsby passed there. Perhaps we ought not to omit that Mrs. Guy Flouncey, to the infinite disgust of Lady St. Julians, who had a daughter with her, successfully entrapped the devoted attentions of the young Marquess of Beaumanoir, who was never very backward if a lady would take trouble enough; while his friend, Mr. Melton, whose barren homage Lady St. Julians wished her daughter ever particularly to shun, employed all his gaiety, good-humour, frivolity, and fashion in amusing that young lady, and with irresistible effect. For the rest, they continued, though they had only partridges to shoot, to pass the morning without weariness. The weather was fine; the stud numerous; all might be mounted. The Grand Duke and his suite, guided by Mr. Rigby, had always some objects to visit, and railroads returned them just in time for the banquet with an appetite which they had earned, and during which Rigby recounted their achievements, and his own opinions.

The dinner was always firstrate; the evening never failed; music, dancing, and the theatre offered great resources independently of the soul-subduing sentiment harshly called flirtation, which is the spell of a country-house. Lord Monmouth was satisfied, for he had scarcely ever felt wearied. All that he required in life was to be amused; perhaps that was not all he required, but it was indispensable. Nor was it wonderful that on the present occasion he obtained his purpose, for there were half a hundred of

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the brightest eyes and quickest brains ever on the watch or the whirl to secure him distraction. The only circumstance that annoyed him was the non-arrival of Sidonia. Lord Monmouth could not bear to be disappointed. He could not refrain from saying, notwithstanding all the resources and all the exertions of his guests,

'I cannot understand why Sidonia does not come. I wish Sidonia were here.'

'So do I,' said Lord Eskdale; 'Sidonia is the only man who tells one anything new.'

'We saw Sidonia at Lord Studcaster's,' said Lord Beaumanoir. 'He told Melton he was coming here.'

'You know he has bought all Studcaster's horses,' said Mr. Melton.

'I wonder he does not buy Studcaster himself,' said Lord Monmouth; 'I would if I were he; Sidonia can buy anything,' he turned to Mrs. Guy Flouncey.

'I wonder who Sidonia is,' thought Mrs. Guy Flouncey, but she was determined no one should suppose she did not know.

At length one day Coningsby met Madame Colonna in the vestibule before dinner.

'Milor is in such good temper, Mr. Coningsby,' she said; 'Monsieur de Sidonia has arrived.'

About ten minutes before dinner there was a stir in the chamber. Coningsby looked round. He saw the Grand Duke advancing, and holding out his hand in a manner the most gracious. A gentleman, of distinguished air, but with his back turned to Coningsby, was bowing as he received his Highness's greeting. There was a general pause in the room. Several came forward: even the Marquess seemed a little

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moved. Coningsby could not resist the impulse of curiosity to see this individual of whom he had heard so much. He glided round the room, and caught the countenance of his companion in the forest inn; he who announced to him, that 'the Age of Ruins was past.'

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CHAPTER XXXII.

SIDONIA.

SIDONIA was descended from a very ancient and noble family of Arragon, that, in the course of ages, had given to the state many distinguished citizens. In the priesthood its members had been peculiarly eminent. Besides several prelates, they counted among their number an Archbishop of Toledo; and a Sidonia, in a season of great danger and difficulty, had exercised for a series of years the paramount office of Grand Inquisitor.

Yet, strange as it may sound, it is nevertheless a fact, of which there is no lack of evidence, that this illustrious family during all this period, in common with two-thirds of the Arragonese nobility, secretly adhered to the ancient faith and ceremonies of their fathers; a belief in the unity of the God of Sinai, and the rights and observances of the laws of Moses.

Whence came those Mosaic Arabs whose passages across the strait from Africa to Europe long preceded the invasion of the Mohammedan Arabs, it is now impossible to ascertain. Their traditions tell us that from time immemorial they had sojourned in Africa;

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and it is not improbable that they may have been the descendants of some of the earlier dispersions; like those Hebrew colonies that we find in China, and who probably emigrated from Persia in the days of the great monarchies. Whatever may have been their origin in Africa, their fortunes in Southern Europe are not difficult to trace, though the annals of no race in any age can detail a history of such strange vicissitudes, or one rife with more touching and romantic incident. Their unexampled prosperity in the Spanish Peninsula, and especially in the south, where they had become the principal cultivators of the soil, excited the jealousy of the Goths; and the Councils of Toledo during the sixth and seventh centuries attempted, by a series of decrees worthy of the barbarians who promulgated them, to root the Jewish Arabs out of the land. There is no doubt the Council of Toledo led, as directly as the lust of Roderick, to the invasion of Spain by the Moslemin Arabs. The Jewish population, suffering under the most sanguinary and atrocious persecution, looked to their sympathising brethren of the Crescent, whose camps already gleamed on the opposite shore. The overthrow of the Gothic kingdoms was as much achieved by the superior information which the Saracens received from their suffering kinsmen, as by the resistless valour of the desert. The Saracen kingdoms were established. That fair and unrivalled civilisation arose which preserved for Europe arts and letters when Christendom was plunged in darkness. The children of Ishmael rewarded the children of Israel with equal rights and privileges with themselves. During these halcyon centuries, it is difficult to distinguish the follower of Moses from the votary of

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Mahomet. Both alike built palaces, gardens, and fountains; filled equally the highest offices of the state, competed in an extensive and enlightened commerce, and rivalled each other in renowned universities.

Even after the fall of the principal Moorish kingdoms, the Jews of Spain were still treated by the conquering Goths with tenderness and consideration. Their numbers, their wealth, the fact that, in Arragon especially, they were the proprietors of the soil and surrounded by warlike and devoted followers, secured for them an usage which, for a considerable period, made them little sensible of the change of dynasties and religions. But the tempest gradually gathered. As the Goths grew stronger, persecution became more bold. Where the Jewish population was scanty they were deprived of their privileges, or obliged to conform under the title of 'Nuevos Christianos.' At length the union of the two crowns under Ferdinand and Isabella, and the fall of the last Moorish kingdom, brought the crisis of their fate both to the New Christian and the non-conforming Hebrew. The Inquisition appeared, the institution that had exterminated the Albigenses and had desolated Languedoc, and which, it should ever be remembered, was established in the Spanish kingdoms against the protests of the Cortes and amid the terror of the populace. The Dominicans opened their first tribunal at Seville, and it is curious that the first individuals they summoned before them were the Duke of Medina Sidonia, the Marquess of Cadiz, and the Count of Arcos; three of the most considerable personages in Spain. How many were burned alive at Seville during the first year, how many imprisoned for life, what countless thousands were visited with severe though lighter

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punishments, need not be recorded here. In nothing was the Holy Office more happy than in multiform and subtle means by which they tested the sincerity of the New Christians.

At length the Inquisition was to be extended to Arragon. The high-spirited nobles of that kingdom knew that its institution was for them a matter of life or death. The Cortes of Arragon appealed to the King and to the Pope; they organised an extensive conspiracy; the chief Inquisitor was assassinated in the cathedral of Saragossa. Alas! it was fated that in this, one of the many, and continual, and continuing struggles between the rival organisations of the North and the South, the children of the sun should fall. The fagot and the San Benito were the doom of the nobles of Arragon. Those who were convicted of secret Judaism, and this scarcely three centuries ago, were dragged to the stake; the sons of the noblest houses, in whose veins the Hebrew taint could be traced, had to walk in solemn procession, singing psalms, and confessing their faith in the religion of the fell Torquemada.

This triumph in Arragon, the almost simultaneous fall of the last Moorish kingdom, raised the hopes of the pure Christians to the highest pitch. Having purged the new Christians, they next turned their attention to the old Hebrews. Ferdinand was resolved that the delicious air of Spain should be breathed no longer by any one who did not profess the Catholic faith. Baptism or exile was the alternative. More than six hundred thousand individuals, some authorities greatly increase the amount, the most industrious, the most intelligent, and the most enlightened of Spanish subjects, would not desert the religion of

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their fathers. For this they gave up the delightful land wherein they had lived for centuries, the beautiful cities they had raised, the universities from which Christendom drew for ages its most precious lore, the tombs of their ancestors, the temples where they had worshipped the God for whom they had made this sacrifice. They had but four months to prepare for eternal exile, after a residence of as many centuries; during which brief period forced sales and glutted markets virtually confiscated their property. It is a calamity that the scattered nation still ranks with the desolations of Nebuchadnezzar and of Titus. Who after this should say the Jews are by nature a sordid people? But the Spanish Goth, then so cruel and so haughty, where is he? A despised suppliant to the very race which he banished, for some miserable portion of the treasure which their habits of industry have again accumulated. Where is that tribunal that summoned Medina Sidonia and Cadiz to its dark inquisition? Where is Spain? Its fall, its unparalleled and its irremediable fall, is mainly to be attributed to the expulsion of that large portion of its subjects, the most industrious and intelligent, who traced their origin to the Mosaic and Mohammedan Arabs.

The Sidonias of Arragon were Nuevos Christianos. Some of them, no doubt, were burned alive at the end of the fifteenth century, under the system of Torquemada; many of them, doubtless, wore the San Benito; but they kept their titles and estates, and in time reached those great offices to which we have referred.

During the long disorders of the Peninsular war, when so many openings were offered to talent, and so many opportunities seized by the adventurous, a

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cadet of a younger branch of this family made a large fortune by military contracts, and supplying the commissariat of the different armies. At the peace, prescient of the great financial future of Europe, confident in the fertility of his own genius, in his original views of fiscal subjects, and his knowledge of national resources, this Sidonia, feeling that Madrid, or even Cadiz, could never be a base on which the monetary transactions of the world could be regulated, resolved to emigrate to England, with which he had, in the course of years, formed considerable commercial connections. He arrived here after the peace of Paris, with his large capital. He staked all that he was worth on the Waterloo loan; and the event made him one of the greatest capitalists in Europe.

No sooner was Sidonia established in England than he professed Judaism; which Torquemada flattered himself, with the fagot and the San Benito, he had drained out of the veins of his family more than three centuries ago. He sent over, also, for several of his brothers, who were as good Catholics in Spain as Ferdinand and Isabella could have possibly desired, but who made an offering in the synagogue, in gratitude for their safe voyage, on their arrival in England.

Sidonia had foreseen in Spain that, after the exhaustion of a war of twenty-five years, Europe must require capital to carry on peace. He reaped the due reward of his sagacity. Europe did require money, and Sidonia was ready to lend it to Europe. France wanted some; Austria more; Prussia a little; Russia a few millions. Sidonia could furnish them all. The only country which he avoided was Spain; he was

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too well acquainted with its resources. Nothing, too, would ever tempt him to lend anything to the revolted colonies of Spain. Prudence saved him from being a creditor of the mother-country; his Spanish pride recoiled from the rebellion of her children.

It is not difficult to conceive that, after having pursued the career we have intimated for about ten years, Sidonia had become one of the most considerable personages in Europe. He had established a brother, or a near relative, in whom he could confide, in most of the principal capitals. He was lord and master of the money-market of the world, and of course virtually lord and master of everything else. He literally held the revenues of Southern Italy in pawn; and monarchs and ministers of all countries courted his advice and were guided by his suggestions. He was still in the vigour of life, and was not a mere money-making machine. He had a general intelligence equal to his position, and looked forward to the period when some relaxation from his vast enterprises and exertions might enable him to direct his energies to great objects of public benefit. But in the height of his vast prosperity he suddenly died, leaving only one child, a youth still of tender years, and heir to the greatest fortune in Europe, so great, indeed, that it could only be calculated by millions.

Shut out from universities and schools, those universities and schools which were indebted for their first knowledge of ancient philosophy to the learning and enterprise of his ancestors, the young Sidonia was fortunate in the tutor whom his father had procured for him, and who devoted to his charge all the resources of his trained intellect and vast and

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various erudition. A Jesuit before the revolution; since then an exiled Liberal leader; now a member of the Spanish Cortes, Rebello was always a Jew. He found in his pupil that precocity of intellectual development which is characteristic of the Arabian organisation. The young Sidonia penetrated the highest mysteries of mathematics with a facility almost instinctive; while a memory which never had any twilight hours, but always reflected a noontide clearness, seemed to magnify his acquisitions of ancient learning by the promptness with which they could be reproduced and applied.

The circumstances of his position, too, had early contributed to give him an unusual command over the modern languages. An Englishman, and taught from his cradle to be proud of being an Englishman, he first evinced in speaking his native language those remarkable powers of expression, and that clear and happy elocution, which ever afterwards distinguished him. But the son of a Spaniard, the sonorous syllables of that noble tongue constantly resounded in his ear; while the foreign guests who thronged his father's mansion habituated him from an early period of life to the tones of languages that were not long strange to him. When he was nineteen, Sidonia, who had then resided some time with his uncle at Naples, and had made a long visit to another of his father's relatives at Frankfort, possessed a complete mastery over the principal European languages.

At seventeen he had parted with Rebello, who returned to Spain, and Sidonia, under the control of his guardians, commenced his travels. He resided, as we have mentioned, some time in Germany, and then, having visited Italy, settled at Naples, at which city

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it may be said he made his entrance into life. With an interesting person, and highly accomplished, he availed himself of the gracious attentions of a court of which he was principal creditor; and which, treating him as a distinguished English traveller, were enabled perhaps to show him some favours that the manners of the country might not have permitted them to accord to his Neapolitan relatives. Sidonia thus obtained at an early age that experience of refined and luxurious society which is a necessary part of a finished education. It gives the last polish to the manners; it teaches us something of the power of the passions, early developed in the hot-bed of self-indulgence; it instils into us that indefinable tact seldom obtained in later life, which prevents us from saying the wrong thing, and often impels us to do the right.

Between Paris and Naples Sidonia passed two years, spent apparently in the dissipation which was perhaps inseparable from his time of life. He was admired by women, to whom he was magnificent, idolised by artists whom he patronised, received in all circles with great distinction, and appreciated for his intellect by the very few to whom he at all opened himself. For, though affable and gracious, it was impossible to penetrate him. Though unreserved in his manner, his frankness was strictly limited to the surface. He observed everything, thought ever, but avoided serious discussion. If you pressed him for an opinion, he took refuge in raillery, or threw out some grave paradox with which it was not easy to cope.

The moment he came of age, Sidonia, having previously, at a great family congress held at Naples, made arrangements with the heads of the houses that

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bore his name respecting the disposition and management of his vast fortune, quitted Europe.

Sidonia was absent from his connections for five years, during which period he never communicated with them. They were aware of his existence only by the orders which he drew on them for payment, and which arrived from all quarters of the globe. It would appear from these documents that he had dwelt a considerable time in the Mediterranean regions; penetrated Nilotic Africa to Sennaar and Abyssinia; traversed the Asiatic continent to Tartary, whence he had visited Hindostan, and the isles of that Indian Sea which are so little known. Afterwards he was heard of at Valparaiso, the Brazils, and Lima. He evidently remained some time at Mexico, which he quitted for the United States. One morning, without notice, he arrived in London.

Sidonia had exhausted all the sources of human knowledge; he was master of the learning of every nation, of all tongues dead or living, of every literature, Western and Oriental. He had pursued the speculations of science to their last term, and had himself illustrated them by observation and experiment. He had lived in all orders of society, had viewed every combination of Nature and of Art, and had observed man under every phasis of civilisation. He had even studied him in the wilderness. The influence of creeds and laws, manners, customs, traditions, in all their diversities, had been subjected to his personal scrutiny.

He brought to the study of this vast aggregate of knowledge a penetrative intellect that, matured by long meditation, and assisted by that absolute freedom from prejudice which was the compensatory

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possession of a man without a country, permitted Sidonia to fathom, as it were by intuition, the depth of questions apparently the most difficult and profound. He possessed the rare faculty of communicating with precision ideas the most abstruse, and in general a power of expression which arrests and satisfies attention.

With all this knowledge, which no one knew more to prize, with boundless wealth, and with an athletic frame, which sickness had never tried, and which had avoided excess, Sidonia nevertheless looked upon life with a glance rather of curiosity than content. His religion walled him out from the pursuits of a citizen; his riches deprived him of the stimulating anxieties of a man. He perceived himself a lone being, alike without cares and without duties.

To a man in his position there might yet seem one unfailing source of felicity and joy; independent of creed, independent of country, independent even of character. He might have discovered that perpetual spring of happiness in the sensibility of the heart. But this was a sealed fountain to Sidonia. In his organisation there was a peculiarity, perhaps a great deficiency. He was a man without affections. It would be harsh to say he had no heart, for he was susceptible of deep emotions, but not for individuals. He was capable of rebuilding a town that was burned down; of restoring a colony that had been destroyed by some awful visitation of Nature; of redeeming to liberty a horde of captives; and of doing these great acts in secret; for, void of all self-love, public approbation was worthless to him; but the individual never touched him. Woman was to him a toy, man a machine.

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The lot the most precious to man, and which a beneficent Providence has made not the least common—to find in another heart a perfect and profound sympathy; to unite his existence with one who could share all his joys, soften all his sorrows, aid him in all his projects, respond to all his fancies, counsel him in his cares, and support him in his perils; make life charming by her charms, interesting by her intelligence, and sweet by the vigilant variety of her tenderness; to find your life blessed by such an influence, and to feel that your influence can bless such a life: this lot, the most divine of divine gifts, that power and even fame can never rival in its delights, all this Nature had denied to Sidonia.

With an imagination as fiery as his native desert, and an intellect as luminous as his native sky, he wanted, like that land, those softening dews without which the soil is barren, and the sunbeam as often a messenger of pestilence as an angel of regenerative grace.

Such a temperament, though rare, is peculiar to the East. It inspired the founders of the great monarchies of antiquity, the prophets that the desert has sent forth, the Tartar chiefs who have overrun the world; it might be observed in the great Corsican, who, like most of the inhabitants of the Mediterranean isles, had probably Arab blood in his veins. It is a temperament that befits conquerors and legislators, but, in ordinary times and ordinary situations, entails on its possessor only eccentric aberrations or profound melancholy.

The only human quality that interested Sidonia was intellect. He cared not whence it came; where it was to be found: creed, country, class, character,

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in this respect, were alike indifferent to him. The author, the artist, the man of science, never appealed to him in vain. Often he anticipated their wants and wishes. He encouraged their society; was as frank in his conversation as he was generous in his contributions; but the instant they ceased to be authors, artists, or philosophers, and their communications arose from anything but the intellectual quality which had originally interested him, the moment they were rash enough to approach intimacy and appealed to the sympathising man, instead of the congenial intelligence, he saw them no more. It was not, however, intellect merely in these unquestionable shapes that commanded his notice. There was not an adventurer in Europe with whom he was not familiar. No Minister of State had such communication with secret agents and political spies as Sidonia. He held relations with all the clever outcasts of the world. The catalogue of his acquaintance in the shape of Greeks, Armenians, Moors, secret Jews, Tartars, Gipsies, wandering Poles and Carbonari, would throw a curious light on those subterranean agencies of which the world in general knows so little, but which exercise so great an influence on public events. His extensive travels, his knowledge of languages, his daring and adventurous disposition, and his unlimited means, had given him opportunities of becoming acquainted with these characters, in general so difficult to trace, and of gaining their devotion. To these sources he owed that knowledge of strange and hidden things which often startled those who listened to him. Nor was it easy, scarcely possible, to deceive him. Information reached him from so many, and such contrary quarters, that with his discrimina-

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tion and experience, he could almost instantly distinguish the truth. The secret history of the world was his pastime. His great pleasure was to contrast the hidden motive, with the public pretext, of transactions.

One source of interest Sidonia found in his descent and in the fortunes of his race. As firm in his adherence to the code of the great Legislator as if the trumpet still sounded on Sinai, he might have received in the conviction of divine favour an adequate compensation for human persecution. But there were other and more terrestrial considerations that made Sidonia proud of his origin, and confident in the future of his kind. Sidonia was a great philosopher, who took comprehensive views of human affairs, and surveyed every fact in its relative position to other facts, the only mode of obtaining truth.

Sidonia was well aware that in the five great varieties into which physiology has divided the human species; to wit, the Caucasian, the Mongolian, the Malayan, the American, the Ethiopian; the Arabian tribes rank in the first and superior class, together, among others, with the Saxon and the Greek. This fact alone is a source of great pride and satisfaction to the animal Man. But Sidonia and his brethren could claim a distinction which the Saxon and the Greek, and the rest of the Caucasian nations, have forfeited. The Hebrew is an unmixed race. Doubtless, among the tribes who inhabit the bosom of the desert, progenitors alike of the Mosaic and the Mohammedan Arabs, blood may be found as pure as that of the descendants of the Sheikh Abraham. But the Mosaic Arabs are the most ancient, if not the only, unmixed blood that dwells in cities.

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An unmixed race of a firstrate organisation are the aristocracy of Nature. Such excellence is a positive fact; not an imagination, a ceremony, coined by poets, blazoned by cozening heralds, but perceptible in its physical advantages, and in the vigour of its unsullied idiosyncrasy.

In his comprehensive travels, Sidonia had visited and examined the Hebrew communities of the world. He had found, in general, the lower orders debased; the superior immersed in sordid pursuits; but he perceived that the intellectual development was not impaired. This gave him hope. He was persuaded that organisation would outlive persecution. When he reflected on what they had endured, it was only marvellous that the race had not disappeared. They had defied exile, massacre, spoliation, the degrading influence of the constant pursuit of gain; they had defied Time. For nearly three thousand years, according to Archbishop Usher, they have been dispersed over the globe. To the unpolluted current of their Caucasian structure, and to the segregating genius of their great Lawgiver, Sidonia ascribed the fact that they had not been long ago absorbed among those mixed races who presume to persecute them, but who periodically wear away and disappear, while their victims still flourish in all the primeval vigour of the pure Asian breed.

Shortly after his arrival in England, Sidonia repaired to the principal Courts of Europe, that he might become personally acquainted with the monarchs and ministers of whom he had heard so much. His position insured him a distinguished reception; his personal qualities immediately made him cherished. He could please; he could do more, he could astonish.

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He could throw out a careless observation which would make the oldest diplomatist start; a winged word that gained him the consideration, sometimes the confidence, of Sovereigns. When he had fathomed the intelligence which governs Europe, and which can only be done by personal acquaintance, he returned to this country.

The somewhat hard and literal character of English life suited one who shrank from sensibility, and often took refuge in sarcasm. Its masculine vigour and active intelligence occupied and interested his mind. Sidonia, indeed, was exactly the character who would be welcomed in our circles. His immense wealth, his unrivalled social knowledge, his clear, vigorous intellect, the severe simplicity of his manners, frank, but neither claiming nor brooking familiarity, and his devotion to field-sports, which was the safety-valve of his energy, were all circumstances and qualities which the English appreciate and admire; and it may be fairly said of Sidonia that few men were more popular, and none less understood.

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CHAPTER XXXIII.

The Versatile Lucian Gay.

T DINNER, Coningsby was seated on the same side as Sidonia, and distant from him. There had been, therefore, no mutual recognition. Another guest had also arrived, Mr. Ormsby. He came straight from London, full of rumours, had seen Tadpole, who, hearing he was on the wing for Coningsby Castle, had taken him into a dark corner of a club, and shown him his book, a safe piece of confidence, as Mr. Ormsby was very near-sighted. It was, however, to be received as an undoubted fact, that all was right, and somehow or other, before very long, there would be national demonstration of the same. This arrival of Mr. Ormsby, and the news that he bore, gave a political turn to the conversation after the ladies had left the room.

'Tadpole wants me to stand for Birmingham,' said Mr. Ormsby, gravely.

'You!' exclaimed Lord Monmouth, and, throwing himself back in his chair, he broke into a real, hearty laugh.

'Yes; the Conservatives mean to start two candi-

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dates; a manufacturer they have got, and they have written up to Tadpole for a "West-end man."'

'A what?'

'A West-end man, who will make the ladies patronise their fancy articles.'

'The result of the Reform Bill, then,' said Lucian Gay, 'will be to give Manchester a bishop, and Birmingham a dandy.'

'I begin to believe the result will be very different from what we expected,' said Lord Monmouth.

Mr. Rigby shook his head and was going to prophesy, when Lord Eskdale, who liked talk to be short, and was of opinion that Rigby should keep his amplifications for his slashing articles, put in a brief careless observation, which balked his inspiration.

'Certainly,' said Mr. Ormsby, 'when the guns were firing over Vyvyan's last speech and confession, I never expected to be asked to stand for Birmingham.'

'Perhaps you may be called up to the other house by the title,' said Lucian Gay. 'Who knows?'

'I agree with Tadpole,' said Mr. Ormsby, 'that if we only stick to the Registration the country is saved.'

'Fortunate country!' said Sidonia, 'that can be saved by a good registration!'

'I believe, after all, that with property and pluck,' said Lord Monmouth, 'Parliamentary Reform is not such a very bad thing.'

Here several gentlemen began talking at the same time, all agreeing with their host, and proving in their different ways, the irresistible influence of property and pluck; property in Lord Monmouth's mind meaning vassals, and pluck a total disregard for public opinion. Mr. Guy Flouncey, who wanted to get into

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Parliament, but why nobody knew, who had neither political abilities nor political opinions, but had some floating idea that it would get himself and his wife to some more balls and dinners, and who was duly ticketed for 'a good thing' in the candidate list of the Tadpoles and the Tapers, was of opinion that an immense deal might be done by properly patronising borough races. That was his specific how to prevent revolution.

Taking advantage of a pause, Lord Monmouth said, 'I should like to know what you think of this question, Sidonia?'

'I am scarcely a competent judge,' he said, as if wishing to disclaim any interference in the conversation, and then added, 'but I have been ever of opinion that revolutions are not to be evaded.'

'Exactly my views,' said Mr. Rigby, eagerly; 'I say it now, I have said it a thousand times, you may doctor the registration as you like, but you can never get rid of Schedule A.'

'Is there a person in this room who can now tell us the names of the boroughs in Schedule A?' said Sidonia.

'I am sure I cannot,' said Lord Monmouth, 'though six of them belong to myself.'

'But the principle,' said Mr. Rigby; 'they represented a principle.'

'Nothing else, certainly,' said Lucian Gay.

'And what principle?' inquired Sidonia.

'The principle of nomination.'

'That is a practice, not a principle,' said Sidonia. 'Is it a practice that no longer exists?'

'You think then,' said Lord Eskdale, cutting in before Rigby, 'that the Reform Bill has done us no harm?'

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'It is not the Reform Bill that has shaken the aristocracy of this country, but the means by which that Bill was carried,' replied Sidonia.

'Physical force?' said Lord Eskdale.

'Or social power?' said Sidonia.

Upon this, Mr. Rigby, impatient at any one giving the tone in a political discussion but himself, and chafing under the vigilance of Lord Eskdale, which to him ever appeared only fortuitous, violently assaulted the argument, and astonished several country gentlemen present by its volubility. They at length listened to real eloquence. At the end of a long appeal to Sidonia, that gentleman only bowed his head and said, 'Perhaps;' and then, turning to his neighbour, inquired whether birds were plentiful in Lancashire this season; so that Mr. Rigby was reduced to the necessity of forming the political opinions of Mr. Guy Flouncey.

As the gentlemen left the dining-room, Coningsby, though at some distance, was observed by Sidonia, who stopped instantly, then advanced to Coningsby, and extending his hand said, 'I said we should meet again, though I hardly expected so quickly.'

'And I hope we shall not separate so soon,' said Coningsby; 'I was much struck with what you said just now about the Reform Bill. Do you know that the more I think the more I am perplexed by what is meant by representation?'

'It is a principle of which a limited definition is only current in this country,' said Sidonia, quitting the room with him. 'People may be represented without periodical elections of neighbours who are incapable to maintain their interests, and strangers who are unwilling.'

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The entrance of the gentlemen produced the same effect on the saloon as sunrise on the world; universal animation, a general though gentle stir. The Grand Duke, bowing to every one, devoted himself to the daughter of Lady St. Julians, who herself pinned Lord Beaumanoir before he could reach Mrs. Guy Flouncey. Coningsby instead talked nonsense to that lady. Brilliant cavaliers, including Mr. Melton, addressed a band of beautiful damsels grouped on a large ottoman. Everywhere sounded a delicious murmur, broken occasionally by a silver-sounding laugh not too loud. Sidonia and Lord Eskdale did not join the ladies. They stood for a few moments in conversation, and then threw themselves on a sofa.

'Who is that?' asked Sidonia of his companion rather earnestly, as Coningsby quitted them.

''Tis the grandson of Monmouth; young Coningsby.'

'Ah! The new generation then promises. I met him once before, by chance; he interests me.'

'They tell me he is a lively lad. He is a prodigious favourite here, and I should not be surprised if Monmouth made him his heir.'

'I hope he does not dream of inheritance,' said Sidonia. ''Tis the most enervating of visions.'

'Do you admire Lady Augustina St. Julians?' said Mrs. Guy Flouncey to Coningsby.

'I admire no one except yourself.'

'Oh! how very gallant, Mr. Coningsby!'

'When should men be gallant, if not to the brilliant and the beautiful!' said Coningsby.

'Ah! you are laughing at me.'

'No, I am not. I am quite grave.'

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'Your eyes laugh. Now tell me, Mr. Coningsby, Lord Henry Sydney is a very great friend of yours?'

'Very.'

'He is very amiable.'

'Very.'

'He does a great deal for the poor at Beaumanoir. A very fine place, is it not?'

'Very.'

'As fine as Coningsby?'

'At present, with Mrs. Guy Flouncey at Coningsby, Beaumanoir would have no chance.'

'Ah! you laugh at me again! Now tell me, Mr. Coningsby, what do you think we shall do to-night? I look upon you, you know, as the real arbiter of our destinies.'

'You shall decide,' said Coningsby.

'*Mon cher* Harry,' said Madame Colonna, coming up, 'they wish Lucretia to sing and she will not. You must ask her, she cannot refuse you.'

'I assure you she can,' said Coningsby.

'*Mon cher* Harry, your grandpapa did desire me to beg you to ask her to sing.'

So Coningsby unwillingly approached Lucretia, who was talking with the Russian Ambassador.

'I am sent upon a fruitless mission,' said Coningsby, looking at her, and catching her glance.

'What, and why?' she replied.

'The mission is to entreat you to do us all a great favour; and the cause of its failure will be that I am the envoy.'

'If the favour be one to yourself it is granted; and if you be the envoy, you need never fear failure with me.'

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'I must presume, then, to lead you away,' said Coningsby, bending to the Ambassador.

'Remember,' said Lucretia, as they approached the instrument, 'that I am singing to you.'

'It is impossible ever to forget it,' said Coningsby, leading her to the piano with great politeness, but only with great politeness.

'Where is Mademoiselle Flora?' she inquired.

Coningsby found La Petite crouching behind some furniture, and apparently looking over some music. She looked up as he approached, and a smile stole over her countenance. 'I am come to ask a favour,' he said, and he named his request.

'I will sing,' she replied; 'but only tell me what you like.'

Coningsby felt the difference between the courtesy of the head and of the heart, as he contrasted the manner of Lucretia and Flora. Nothing could be more exquisitely gracious than the daughter of Colonna was to-night; Flora, on the contrary, was rather agitated and embarrassed; and did not express her readiness with half the facility and the grace of Lucretia; but Flora's arm trembled as Coningsby led her to the piano.

Meantime Lord Eskdale and Sidonia are in deep converse.

'Hah! that is a fine note!' said Sidonia, and he looked round. 'Who is that singing? Some new *protégée* of Lord Monmouth?'

''Tis the daughter of the Colonnas,' said Lord Eskdale, 'the Princess Lucretia.'

'Why, she was not at dinner to-day.'

'No, she was not there.'

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'My favourite voice; and of all, the rarest to be found. When I was a boy, it made me almost in love even with Pisaroni.'

'Well, the Princess is scarcely more lovely. 'Tis a pity the plumage is not as beautiful as the note. She is plain.'

'No; not plain with that brow.'

'Well, I rather admire her myself,' said Lord Eskdale. 'She has fine points.'

'Let us approach,' said Sidonia.

The song ceased, Lord Eskdale advanced, made his compliments, and then said, 'You were not at dinner to-day.'

'Why should I be?' said the Princess.

'For our sakes, for mine, if not for your own,' said Lord Eskdale, smiling. 'Your absence has been remarked, and felt, I assure you, by others as well as myself. There is my friend Sidonia so enraptured with your thrilling tones, that he has abruptly closed a conversation which I have been long counting on. Do you know him? May I present him to you?'

And having obtained a consent, not often conceded, Lord Eskdale looked around, and calling Sidonia, he presented his friend to the Princess.

'You are fond of music, Lord Eskdale tells me?' said Lucretia.

'When it is excellent,' said Sidonia.

'But that is so rare,' said the Princess.

'And precious as Paradise,' said Sidonia. 'As for indifferent music, 'tis Purgatory; but when it is bad, for my part I feel myself——'

'Where?' said Lord Eskdale.

'In the last circle of the Inferno,' said Sidonia.

Lord Eskdale turned to Flora.

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'And in what circle do you place us who are here?' the Princess inquired of Sidonia.

'One too polished for his verse,' replied her companion.

'You mean too insipid,' said the Princess. 'I wish that life were a little more Dantesque.'

'There is not less treasure in the world,' said Sidonia, 'because we use paper currency; and there is not less passion than of old, though it is *bon ton* to be tranquil.'

'Do you think so?' said the Princess, inquiringly, and then looking round the apartment. 'Have these automata, indeed, souls?'

'Some of them,' said Sidonia. 'As many as would have had souls in the fourteenth century.'

'I thought they were wound up every day,' said the Princess.

'Some are self-impelling,' said Sidonia.

'And you can tell at a glance?' inquired the Princess. 'You are one of those who can read human nature?'

''Tis a book open to all.'

'But if they cannot read?'

'Those must be your automata.'

'Lord Monmouth tells me you are a great traveller?'

'I have not discovered a new world.'

'But you have visited it?'

'It is getting old.'

'I would sooner recall the old than discover the new,' said the Princess.

'We have both of us cause,' said Sidonia. 'Our names are the names of the past.'

'I do not love a world of utility,' said the Princess.

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'You prefer to be celebrated to being comfortable,' said Sidonia.

'It seems to me that the world is withering under routine.'

''Tis the inevitable lot of humanity,' said Sidonia. 'Man must ever be the slave of routine: but in old days it was a routine of great thoughts, and now it is a routine of little ones.'

The evening glided on; the dance succeeded the song; the ladies were fast vanishing; Coningsby himself was meditating a movement, when Lord Beaumanoir, as he passed him, said, 'Come to Lucian Gay's room; we are going to smoke a cigar.'

This was a favourite haunt, towards midnight, of several of the younger members of the party at the Castle, who loved to find relaxation from the decorous gravities of polished life in the fumes of tobacco, the inspiration of whiskey toddy, and the infinite amusement of Lucian Gay's conversation and company. This was the genial hour when the good story gladdened, the pun flashed, and the song sparkled with jolly mirth or saucy mimicry. To-night, being Coningsby's initiation, there was a special general meeting of the Grumpy Club, in which everybody was to say the gayest things with the gravest face, and every laugh carried a forfeit. Lucian was the inimitable president. He told a tale for which he was famous, of 'the very respectable county family who had been established in the shire for several generations, but who, it was a fact, had been ever distinguished by the strange and humiliating peculiarity of being born with sheep's tails.' The remarkable circumstances under which Lucian Gay had become acquainted with this fact; the traditionary mysteries by which the

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family in question had succeeded for generations in keeping it secret; the decided measures to which the chief of the family had recourse to stop for ever the rumour when it first became prevalent; and finally the origin and result of the legend; were details which Lucian Gay, with the most rueful countenance, loved to expend upon the attentive and expanding intelligence of a new member of the Grumpy Club. Familiar as all present were with the story whose stimulus of agonising risibility they had all in turn experienced, it was with extreme difficulty that any of them could resist the fatal explosion which was to be attended with the dreaded penalty. Lord Beaumanoir looked on the table with desperate seriousness, an ominous pucker quivering round his lip; Mr. Melton crammed his handkerchief into his mouth with one hand, while he lighted the wrong end of a cigar with the other; one youth hung over the back of his chair pinching himself like a faquir, while another hid his countenance on the table.

'It was at the Hunt dinner,' continued Lucian Gay, in an almost solemn tone, 'that an idea for a moment was prevalent, that Sir Mowbray Cholmondeley Fetherstonehaugh, as the head of the family, had resolved to terminate for ever these mysterious aspersions on his race, that had circulated in the county for more than two centuries; I mean that the highly respectable family of the Cholmondeley Fetherstonehaughs had the misfortune to be graced with that appendage to which I have referred. His health being drunk, Sir Mowbray Cholmondeley Fetherstonehaugh rose. He was a little unpopular at the moment, from an ugly story about killing foxes, and the guests were not as quiet as orators generally desire,

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so the Honourable Baronet prayed particular attention to a matter personal to himself. Instantly there was a dead silence——' but here Coningsby, who had moved for some time very restlessly on his chair, suddenly started up, and struggling for a moment against the inward convulsion, but in vain, stamped against the floor, and gave a shout.

'A song from Mr. Coningsby,' said the president of the Grumpy Club, amid an universal, and now permissible roar of laughter.

Coningsby could not sing; so he was to favour them as a substitute with a speech or a sentiment. But Lucian Gay always let one off these penalties easily, and, indeed, was ever ready to fulfil them for all. Song, speech, or sentiment, he poured them all forth; nor were pastimes more active wanting. He could dance a Tarantalla like a Lazzarone, and execute a Cracovienne with all the mincing graces of a ballet heroine.

His powers of mimicry, indeed, were great and versatile. But in nothing was he so happy as in a Parliamentary debate. And it was remarkable that, though himself a man who on ordinary occasions was quite incapable without infinite perplexity of publicly expressing his sense of the merest courtesy of society, he was not only a master of the style of every speaker of distinction in either house, but he seemed in his imitative play to appropriate their intellectual as well as their physical peculiarities, and presented you with their mind as well as their manner. There were several attempts to-night to induce Lucian to indulge his guests with a debate, but he seemed to avoid the exertion, which was great. As the night grew old, however, and every hour he grew more

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lively, he suddenly broke without further pressure into the promised diversion; and Coningsby listened really with admiration to a discussion, of which the only fault was that it was more parliamentary than the original, *plus Arabe que l'Arabie.*

The Duke was never more curt, nor Sir Robert more specious; he was as fiery as Stanley, and as bitter as Graham. Nor did he do their opponents less justice. Lord Palmerston himself never treated a profound subject with a more pleasant volatility; and when Lucian rose at an early hour of morn, in a full house alike exhausted and excited, and after having endured for hours, in sarcastic silence, the menacing finger of Sir Robert, shaking over the green table and appealing to his misdeeds in the irrevocable records of Hansard, Lord John himself could not have afforded a more perfect representative of pluck.

But loud as was the laughter and vehement the cheering, with which Lucian's performances were received, all these ebullitions sank into insignificance compared with the reception which greeted what he himself announced was to be the speech of the night. Having quaffed full many a quaigh of toddy, he insisted on delivering it on the table, a proposition with which his auditors immediately closed.

The orator appeared, the great man of the night, who was to answer everybody on both sides. Ah! that harsh voice, that arrogant style, that saucy superficiality which decided on everything, that insolent ignorance that contradicted everybody; it was impossible to mistake them! And Coningsby had the pleasure of seeing reproduced before him the guardian of his youth and the patron of the mimic, the Right Honourable Nicholas Rigby!

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CHAPTER XXXIV.

Lucretia's Plans.

MADAME COLONNA, with that vivacious energy which characterises the south, had no sooner seen Coningsby, and heard his praises celebrated by his grandfather, than she resolved that an alliance should sooner or later take place between him and her step-daughter. She imparted her projects without delay to Lucretia, who received them in a different spirit from that in which they were communicated. Lucretia bore as little resemblance to her step-mother in character as in person. If she did not possess her beauty, she was born with an intellect of far greater capacity and reach. She had a deep judgment. A hasty alliance with a youth, arranged by their mutual relatives, might suit very well the clime and manners of Italy, but Lucretia was well aware that it was altogether opposed to the habits and feelings of this country. She had no conviction that either Coningsby would wish to marry her, or, if willing, that his grandfather would sanction such a step in one as yet only on the threshold of the world. Lucretia therefore received the suggestions and proposals of Madame Colonna with coldness and indifference; one might even say

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contempt, for she neither felt respect for this lady, nor was she sedulous to evince it. Although really younger than Coningsby, Lucretia felt that a woman of eighteen is, in all worldly considerations, ten years older than a youth of the same age. She anticipated that a considerable time might elapse before Coningsby would feel it necessary to seal his destiny by marriage, while, on the other hand, she was not only anxious, but resolved, not to delay on her part her emancipation from the galling position in which she very frequently found herself.

Lucretia felt rather than expressed these ideas and impressions. She was not naturally communicative, and conversed with no one with less frankness and facility than with her step-mother. Madame Colonna therefore found no reasons in her conversation with Lucretia to change her determination. As her mind was not ingenious, she did not see questions in those various lights which make us at the same time infirm of purpose and tolerant. What she fancied ought to be done, she fancied must be done; for she perceived no middle course or alternative. For the rest, Lucretia's carriage towards her gave her little discomfort. Besides, she herself, though good-natured, was obstinate. Her feelings were not very acute; nothing much vexed her. As long as she had fine dresses, good dinners, and opera-boxes, she could bear her plans to be crossed like a philosopher; and her consolation under her unaccomplished devices was her admirable consistency, which always assured her that her projects were wise, though unfulfilled.

She broke her purpose to Mr. Rigby, that she might gain not only his adhesion to her views, but his assistance in achieving them. As Madame Colonna,

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in Mr. Rigby's estimation, exercised more influence over Lord Monmouth than any other individual, faithful to his policy or practice, he agreed with all Madame Colonna's plans and wishes, and volunteered instantly to further them. As for the Prince, his wife never consulted him on any subject, nor did he wish to be consulted. On the contrary, he had no opinion about anything. All that he required was that he should be surrounded by what contributed to his personal enjoyment, that he should never be troubled, and that he should have billiards. He was not inexpert in field-sports, rode indeed very well for an Italian, but he never cared to be out-of-doors; and there was only one room in the interior which passionately interested him. It was where the echoing balls denoted the sweeping hazard or the effective cannonade. That was the chamber where the Prince Colonna literally existed. Half-an-hour after breakfast he was in the billiard-room; he never quitted it until he dressed for dinner; and he generally contrived, while the world were amused or amusing themselves at the comedy or in the dance, to steal down with some congenial sprites to the magical and illumined chamber, and use his cue until bedtime.

Faithful to her first impressions, Lucretia had made no difference in her demeanour to Coningsby to that which she offered to the other guests. Polite, but uncommunicative; ready to answer, but never originating conversation; she charmed him as little by her manner as by her person; and after some attempts, not very painstaking, to interest her, Coningsby had ceased to address her. The day passed by with only a faint recognition between them; even that sometimes omitted.

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When, however, Lucretia observed that Coningsby had become one of the most notable persons in the Castle; when she heard everywhere of his talents and accomplishments, his beauty and grace and great acquirements, and perceived that he was courted by all; that Lord Monmouth omitted no occasion publicly to evince towards him his regard and consideration; that he seemed generally looked upon in the light of his grandfather's heir; and that Lady St. Julians, more learned in that respect than any lady in the kingdom, was heard more than once to regret that she had not brought another daughter with her, Clara Isabella, as well as Augustina; the Princess Lucretia began to imagine that Madame Colonna, after all, might not be so extravagant in her purpose as she had first supposed. She, therefore, surprised Coningsby with the almost affectionate moroseness with which, while she hated to sing, she yet found pleasure in singing for him alone. And it is impossible to say what might not have been the next move in her tactics in this respect, had not the very night on which she had resolved to commence the enchantment on Coningsby introduced her to Sidonia.

The Princess Lucretia encountered the dark still glance of the friend of Lord Eskdale. He, too, beheld a woman unlike other women, and with his fine experience, both as a man and as a physiologist, felt that he was in the presence of no ordinary organisation. From the evening of his introduction Sidonia sought the society of the Princess Lucretia. He could not complain of her reserve. She threw out her mind in various and highly-cultivated intelligence. He recognised in her a deep and subtle spirit, considerable reading for a woman, habits of thought, and

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a soul passionate and daring. She resolved to subdue one whose appreciation she had gained, and who had subdued her. The profound meaning and the calm manner of Sidonia combined to quell her spirit. She struggled against the spell. She tried to rival his power; to cope with him, and with the same weapons. But prompt as was her thought and bright as was its expression, her heart beat in tumult; and, with all her apparent serenity, her agitated soul was a prey of absorbing passion. She could not contend with that intelligent, yet inscrutable, eye; with that manner so full of interest and respect, and yet so tranquil. Besides, they were not on equal terms. Here was a girl contending with a man learned in the world's ways.

Between Sidonia and Coningsby there at once occurred companionship. The morning after his arrival they went out shooting together. After a long ramble they would stretch themselves on the turf under a shady tree, often by the side of some brook where the cresses grow, that added a luxury to their sporting meal; and then Coningsby would lead their conversation to some subject on which Sidonia would pour out his mind with all that depth of reflection, variety of knowledge, and richness of illustrative memory, which distinguished him; and which offered so striking a contrast to the sharp talent, the shallow information, and the worldly cunning, that make a Rigby.

This fellowship between Sidonia and Coningsby elevated the latter still more in the estimation of Lucretia, and rendered her still more desirous of gaining his good will and opinion. A great friendship seemed to have arisen between them, and the world began to believe that there must be some foundation

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for Madame Colonna's innuendos. That lady herself was not in the least alarmed by the attention which Sidonia paid her step-daughter. It was, of course, well known that Sidonia was not a marrying man. He was, however, a great friend of Mr. Coningsby, his presence and society brought Coningsby and Lucretia more together; and however flattered her daughter might be for the moment by Sidonia's homage, still, as she would ultimately find out, if indeed she ever cared so to do, that Sidonia could only be her admirer, Madame Colonna had no kind of doubt that ultimately Coningsby would be Lucretia's husband, as she had arranged from the first.

The Princess Lucretia was a fine horse-woman, though she rarely joined the various riding-parties that were daily formed at the Castle. Often, indeed, attended only by her groom, she met the equestrians. Now she would ride with Sidonia and Coningsby, and as a female companion was indispensable, she insisted upon La Petite accompanying her. This was a fearful trial for Flora, but she encountered it, encouraged by the kind solicitude of Coningsby, who always seemed her friend.

Very shortly after the arrival of Sidonia, the Grand Duke and his suite quitted the Castle, which had been his Highness's head-quarters during his visit to the manufacturing districts; but no other great change in the assembled company occurred for some little time.

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CHAPTER XXXV.

Sidonia's Views.

'OU will observe one curious trait,' said Sidonia to Coningsby, 'in the history of this country: the depository of power is always unpopular; all combine against it; it always falls. Power was deposited in the great Barons; the Church, using the King for its instrument, crushed the great Barons. Power was deposited in the Church; the King, bribing the Parliament, plundered the Church. Power was deposited in the King; the Parliament, using the people, beheaded the King, expelled the King, changed the King, and, finally, for a King substituted an administrative officer. For one hundred and fifty years Power has been deposited in the Parliament, and for the last sixty or seventy years it has been becoming more and more unpopular. In 1830 it was endeavoured by a reconstruction to regain the popular affection; but, in truth, as the Parliament then only made itself more powerful, it has only become more odious. As we see that the Barons, the Church, the King, have in turn devoured each other, and that the Parliament, the last devourer, remains, it is im-

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possible to resist the impression that this body also is doomed to be destroyed; and he is a sagacious statesman who may detect in what form and in what quarter the great consumer will arise.'

'You take, then, a dark view of our position?'

'Troubled, not dark. I do not ascribe to political institutions that paramount influence which it is the feeling of this age to attribute to them. The Senate that confronted Brennus in the Forum was the same body that registered in an after-age the ribald decrees of a Nero. Trial by jury, for example, is looked upon by all as the palladium of our liberties; yet a jury, at a very recent period of our own history, the reign of Charles II., was a tribunal as iniquitous as the Inquisition.' And a graver expression stole over the countenance of Sidonia as he remembered what that Inquisition had operated on his own race and his own destiny. 'There are families in this country,' he continued, 'of both the great historical parties, that in the persecution of their houses, the murder and proscription of some of their most illustrious members, found judges as unjust and relentless in an open jury of their countrymen as we did in the conclaves of Madrid and Seville.'

'Where, then, would you look for hope?'

'In what is more powerful than laws and institutions, and without which the best laws and the most skilful institutions may be a dead letter, or the very means of tyranny in the national character. It is not in the increased feebleness of its institutions that I see the peril of England; it is in the decline of its character as a community.'

'And yet you could scarcely describe this as an age of corruption?'

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'Not of political corruption. But it is an age of social disorganisation, far more dangerous in its consequences, because far more extensive. You may have a corrupt government and a pure community; you may have a corrupt community and a pure administration. Which would you elect?'

'Neither,' said Coningsby; 'I wish to see a people full of faith, and a government full of duty.'

'Rely upon it,' said Sidonia, 'that England should think more of the community and less of the government.'

'But tell me, what do you understand by the term national character?'

'A character is an assemblage of qualities; the character of England should be an assemblage of great qualities.'

'But we cannot deny that the English have great virtues.'

'The civilisation of a thousand years must produce great virtues; but we are speaking of the decline of public virtue, not its existence.'

'In what, then, do you trace that decline?'

'In the fact that the various classes of this country are arrayed against each other.'

'But to what do you attribute those reciprocal hostilities?'

'Not entirely, not even principally, to those economical causes of which we hear so much. I look upon all such as secondary causes, which, in a certain degree, must always exist, which obtrude themselves in troubled times, and which at all times it is the business of wise statesmen to watch, to regulate, to ameliorate, to modify.'

'I am speaking to elicit truth, not to maintain opin-

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ions,' said Coningsby; 'for I have none,' he added, mournfully.

'I think,' said Sidonia, 'that there is no error so vulgar as to believe that revolutions are occasioned by economical causes. They come in, doubtless, very often to precipitate a catastrophe; very rarely do they occasion one. I know no period, for example, when physical comfort was more diffused in England than in 1640. England had a moderate population, a very improved agriculture, a rich commerce; yet she was on the eve of the greatest and most violent changes that she has as yet experienced.'

'That was a religious movement.'

'Admit it; the cause, then, was not physical. The imagination of England rose against the government. It proves, then, that when that faculty is astir in a nation, it will sacrifice even physical comfort to follow its impulses.'

'Do you think, then, there is a wild desire for extensive political change in the country?'

'Hardly that: England is perplexed at the present moment, not inventive. That will be the next phasis in her moral state, and to that I wish to draw your thoughts. For myself, while I ascribe little influence to physical causes for the production of this perplexity, I am still less of opinion that it can be removed by any new disposition of political power. It would only aggravate the evil. That would be recurring to the old error of supposing you can necessarily find national content in political institutions. A political institution is a machine; the motive power is the national character. With that it rests whether the machine will benefit society, or destroy it. Society in this country is perplexed, almost paralysed; in

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time it will move, and it will devise. How are the elements of the nation to be again blended together? In what spirit is that reorganisation to take place?'

'To know that would be to know everything.'

'At least let us free ourselves from the double ignorance of the Platonists. Let us not be ignorant that we are ignorant.'

'I have emancipated myself from that darkness for a long time,' said Coningsby. 'Long has my mind been musing over these thoughts, but to me all is still obscurity.'

'In this country,' said Sidonia, 'since the peace, there has been an attempt to advocate a reconstruction of society on a purely rational basis. The principle of utility has been powerfully developed. I speak not with lightness of the labours of the disciples of that school. I bow to intellect in every form: and we should be grateful to any school of philosophers, even if we disagree with them; doubly grateful in this country, where for so long a period our statesmen were in so pitiable an arrear of public intelligence. There has been an attempt to reconstruct society on a basis of material motives and calculations. It has failed. It must ultimately have failed under any circumstances; its failure in an ancient and densely-peopled kingdom was inevitable. How limited is human reason, the profoundest inquirers are most conscious. We are not indebted to the reason of man for any of the great achievements which are the landmarks of human action and human progress. It was not reason that besieged Troy; it was not reason that sent forth the Saracen from the desert to conquer the world; that inspired the Crusades; that instituted the Monastic orders; it was not reason that

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produced the Jesuits; above all, it was not reason that created the French Revolution. Man is only truly great when he acts from the passions; never irresistible but when he appeals to the imagination. Even Mormon counts more votaries than Bentham.'

'And you think, then, that as imagination once subdued the State, imagination may now save it?'

'Man is made to adore and to obey: but if you will not command him, if you give him nothing to worship, he will fashion his own divinities, and find a chieftain in his own passions.'

'But where can we find faith in a nation of sectaries? Who can feel loyalty to a sovereign of Downing Street?'

'I speak of the eternal principles of human nature, you answer me with the passing accidents of the hour. Sects rise and sects disappear. Where are the Fifth-Monarchy men? England is governed by Downing Street; once it was governed by Alfred and Elizabeth.'

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CHAPTER XXXVI.

The Steeple-Chase.

BOUT this time a steeple-chase in the West of England had attracted considerable attention. This sport was then of recent introduction in England, and is, in fact, an importation of Irish growth, although it has flourished in our soil. A young guardsman, who was then a guest at the Castle, and who had been in garrison in Ireland, had some experience of this pastime in the Kildare country, and he proposed that they should have a steeple-chase at Coningsby. This was a suggestion very agreeable to the Marquess of Beaumanoir, celebrated for his feats of horsemanship, and, indeed, to most of the guests. It was agreed that the race should come off at once, before any of the present company, many of whom gave symptons of being on the wing, had quitted the Castle. The young guardsman and Mr. Guy Flouncey had surveyed the country, and had selected a line which they esteemed very appropriate for the scene of action. From a hill of common land you looked down upon the valley of Coningsby, richly cultivated, deeply ditched, and stiffly fenced; the valley was

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bounded by another rising ground, and the scene was admirably calculated to give an extensive view to a multitude.

The distance along the valley was to be two miles out, and home again; the starting-post being also the winning-post, and the flags, which were placed on every fence which the horses were to pass, were to be passed on the left hand of the rider both going and coming; so that although the horses had to leap the same fences forward and backward, they could not come over the same place twice. In the last field before they turned, was a brook seventeen feet clear from side to side, with good taking off on both banks. Here real business commenced.

Lord Monmouth highly approved the scheme, but mentioned that the stakes must be moderate, and open to the whole county. The neighbourhood had a week of preparation, and the entries for the Coningsby steeple-chase were numerous. Lord Monmouth, after a reserve for his own account, placed his stable at the service of his guests. For himself, he offered to back his horse, Sir Robert, which was to be ridden by his grandson.

Now, nothing was spoken or thought of at Coningsby Castle except the coming sport. The ladies shared the general excitement. They embroidered handkerchiefs, and scarfs, and gloves, with the respective colours of the rivals, and tried to make jockey-caps. Lady St. Julians postponed her intended departure in consequence. Madame Colonna wished that some means could be contrived by which they might all win.

Sidonia, with the other competitors, had ridden over the ground and glanced at the brook with the

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eye of a workman. On his return to the Castle he sent a despatch for some of his stud.

Coningsby was all anxiety to win. He was proud of the confidence of his grandfather in backing him. He had a powerful horse and a first-rate fencer, and he was resolved himself not to flinch. On the night before the race, retiring somewhat earlier than usual to his chamber, he observed on his dressing-table a small packet addressed to his name, and in an unknown handwriting. Opening it, he found a pretty racing-jacket embroidered with his colours of pink and white. This was a perplexing circumstance, but he fancied it on the whole a happy omen. And who was the donor? Certainly not the Princess Lucretia, for he had observed her fashioning some maroon ribbons, which were the colours of Sidonia. It could scarcely be from Mrs. Guy Flouncey. Perhaps Madame Colonna, to please the Marquess? Thinking over this incident, he fell asleep.

The morning before the race Sidonia's horses arrived. All went to examine them at the stables. Among them was an Arab mare. Coningsby recognised the Daughter of the Star. She was greatly admired for her points; but Guy Flouncey whispered to Mr. Melton that she never could do the work.

'But Lord Beaumanoir says he is all for speed against strength in these affairs,' said Mr. Melton.

Guy Flouncey smiled incredulously.

The night before the race it rained rather heavily.

'I take it the country will not be very like the deserts of Arabia,' said Mr. Guy Flouncey, with a knowing look to Mr. Melton, who was noting a bet in his memorandum-book.

The morning was fine, clear, and sunny, with a

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soft western breeze. The starting-post was about three miles from the Castle; but, long before the hour, the surrounding hills were covered with people; squire and farmer; with no lack of their wives and daughters; mang a hind in his smock-frock, and many an 'operative' from the neighbouring factories. The 'gentlemen riders' gradually arrived. The entries were very numerous, though it was understood that not more than a dozen would come to the post, and half of these were the guests of Lord Monmouth. At half-past one the *cortège* from the Castle arrived, and took up the post which had been prepared for them on the summit of the hill. Lord Monmouth was much cheered on his arrival. In the carriage with him were Madame Colonna and Lady St. Julians. The Princess Lucretia, Lady Gaythorpe, Mrs. Guy Flouncey, accompanied by Lord Eskdale and other cavaliers, formed a brilliant company. There was scarcely a domestic in the Castle who was not there. The comedians, indeed, did not care to come, but Villebecque prevailed upon Flora to drive with him to the race in a buggy he borrowed of the steward.

The start was to be at two o'clock. The 'gentlemen jockeys' are mustered. Never were riders mounted and appointed in better style. The stewards and the clerk of the course attend them to the starting-post. There they are now assembled. Guy Flouncey takes up his stirrup-leathers a hole; Mr. Melton looks at his girths. In a few moments, the irrevocable monosyllable will be uttered.

The bugle sounds for them to face about; the clerk of the course sings out, 'Gentlemen, are you all ready?' No objection made, the word given to go, and fifteen riders start in excellent style.

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Prince Colonna, who rode like Prince Rupert, took the lead, followed close by a stout yeoman on an old white horse of great provincial celebrity, who made steady running, and, from his appearance and action, an awkward customer. The rest, with two exceptions, followed in a cluster at no great distance, and in this order they continued, with very slight variation, for the first two miles, though there were several ox-fences, and one or two of them remarkably stiff. Indeed, they appeared more like horses running over a course than over a country. The two exceptions were Lord Beaumanoir on his horse Sunbeam, and Sidonia on the Arab. These kept somewhat slightly in the rear.

Almost in this wise they approached the dreaded brook. Indeed, with the exception of the last two riders, who were about thirty yards behind, it seemed that you might have covered the rest of the field with a sheet. They arrived at the brook at the same moment: seventeen feet of water between strong sound banks is no holiday work; but they charged with unfaltering intrepidity. But what a revolution in their spirited order did that instant produce! A masked battery of canister and grape could not have achieved more terrible execution. Coningsby alone clearly lighted on the opposing bank; but, for the rest of them, it seemed for a moment that they were all in the middle of the brook, one over another, splashing, kicking, swearing; every one trying to get out and keep others in. Mr. Melton and the stout yeoman regained their saddles and were soon again in chase. The Prince lost his horse, and was not alone in his misfortune. Mr. Guy Flouncey lay on his back with a horse across his diaphragm; only his

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head above the water, and his mouth full of chickweed and dockleaves. And if help had not been at hand, he and several others might have remained struggling in their watery bed for a considerable period. In the midst of this turmoil, the Marquess and Sidonia at the same moment cleared the brook.

Affairs now became interesting. Here Coningsby took up the running, Sidonia and the Marquess lying close at his quarters. Mr. Melton had gone the wrong side of a flag, and the stout yeoman, though close at hand, was already trusting much to his spurs. In the extreme distance might be detected three or four stragglers. Thus they continued until within three fields of home. A ploughed field finished the old white horse; the yeoman struck his spurs to the rowels, but the only effect of the experiment was, that the horse stood stock-still. Coningsby, Sidonia, and the Marquess were now all together. The winning-post is in sight, and a high and strong gate leads to the last field. Coningsby, looking like a winner, gallantly dashed forward and sent Sir Robert at the gate, but he had over-estimated his horse's powers at this point of the game, and a rattling fall was the consequence: however, horse and rider were both on the right side, and Coningsby was in his saddle and at work again in a moment. It seemed that the Marquess was winning. There was only one more fence; and that the foot-people had made a breach in by the side of a gate-post, and wide enough as was said, for a broad-wheel waggon to travel by. Instead of passing straight over this gap, Sunbeam swerved against the gate and threw his rider. This was decisive. The Daughter of the Star, who was still going beautifully, pulling double, and

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her jockey sitting still, sprang over the gap and went in first; Coningsby, on Sir Robert, being placed second. The distance measured was about four miles; there were thirty-nine leaps; and it was done under fifteen minutes.

Lord Monmouth was well content with the prowess of his grandson, and his extreme cordiality consoled Coningsby under a defeat which was very vexatious. It was some alleviation that he was beaten by Sidonia. Madame Colonna even shed tears at her young friend's disappointment, and mourned it especially for Lucretia, who had said nothing, though a flush might be observed on her usually pale countenance. Villebecque, who had betted, was so extremely excited by the whole affair, especially during the last three minutes, that he quite forgot his quiet companion, and when he looked round he found Flora fainting.

'You rode well,' said Sidonia to Coningsby; 'but your horse was more strong than swift. After all, this thing is a race; and, notwithstanding Solomon, in a race speed must win.'

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CHAPTER XXXVII.

The Glory of Israel.

NOTWITHSTANDING the fatigues of the morning, the evening was passed with great gaiety at the Castle. The gentlemen all vowed that, far from being inconvenienced by their mishaps, they felt, on the whole, rather better for them. Mr. Guy Flouncey, indeed, did not seem quite so limber and flexible as usual; and the young guardsman, who had previously discoursed in an almost alarming style of the perils and feats of the Kildare country, had subsided into a remarkable reserve. The provincials were delighted with Sidonia's riding, and even the Leicestershire gentlemen admitted that he was a 'customer.'

Lord Monmouth beckoned to Coningsby to sit by him on the sofa, and spoke of his approaching University life. He gave his grandson a great deal of good advice: told him to avoid drinking, especially if he ever chanced to play cards, which he hoped he never would; urged the expediency of never borrowing money, and of confining his loans to small sums, and then only to friends of whom he wished to get rid; most particularly impressed on him never to per-

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mit his feelings to be engaged by any woman; nobody, he assured Coningsby, despised that weakness more than women themselves. Indeed, feeling of any kind did not suit the present age: it was not *bon ton;* and in some degree always made a man ridiculous. Coningsby was always to have before him the possible catastrophe of becoming ridiculous. It was the test of conduct, Lord Monmouth said; a fear of becoming ridiculous is the best guide in life, and will save a man from all sorts of scrapes. For the rest, Coningsby was to appear at Cambridge as became Lord Monmouth's favourite grandson. His grandfather had opened an account for him with Drummonds', on whom he was to draw for his considerable allowance; and if by any chance he found himself in a scrape, no matter of what kind, he was to be sure to write to his grandfather, who would certainly get him out of it.

'Your departure is sudden,' said the Princess Lucretia, in a low, deep tone to Sidonia, who was sitting by her side and screened from general observation by the waltzers who whirled by.

'Departures should be sudden.'

'I do not like departures,' said the Princess.

'Nor did the Queen of Sheba when she quitted Solomon. You know what she did?'

'Tell me.'

'She wept very much, and let one of the King's birds fly into the garden. "You are freed from your cage," she said; "but I am going back to mine."'

'But you never weep?' said the Princess.

'Never.'

'And are always free?'

'So are men in the desert.'

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'But your life is not a desert?'

'It at least resembles the desert in one respect: it is useless.'

'The only useless life is woman's.'

'Yet there have been heroines,' said Sidonia.

'The Queen of Sheba,' said the Princess, smiling.

'A favourite of mine,' said Sidonia.

'And why was she a favourite of yours?' rather eagerly inquired Lucretia.

'Because she thought deeply, talked finely, and moved gracefully.'

'And yet might be a very unfeeling dame at the same time,' said the Princess.

'I never thought of that,' said Sidonia.

'The heart, apparently, does not reckon in your philosophy.'

'What we call the heart,' said Sidonia, 'is a nervous sensation, like shyness, which gradually disappears in society. It is fervent in the nursery, strong in the domestic circle, tumultuous at school. The affections are the children of ignorance; when the horizon of our experience expands, and models multiply, love and admiration imperceptibly vanish.'

'I fear the horizon of your experience has very greatly expanded. With your opinions, what charm can there be in life?'

'The sense of existence.'

'So Sidonia is off to-morrow, Monmouth,' said Lord Eskdale.

'Hah!' said the Marquess. 'I must get him to breakfast with me before he goes.'

The party broke up. Coningsby, who had heard Lord Eskdale announce Sidonia's departure, lingered to express his regret and say farewell.

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'I cannot sleep,' said Sidonia, 'and I never smoke in Europe. If you are not stiff with your wounds, come to my rooms.'

This invitation was willingly accepted.

'I am going to Cambridge in a week,' said Coningsby. 'I was almost in hopes you might have remained as long.'

'I, also; but my letters of this morning demand me. If it had not been for our chase, I should have quitted immediately. The minister cannot pay the interest on the national debt; not an unprecedented circumstance, and has applied to us. I never permit any business of State to be transacted without my personal interposition; and so I must go up to town immediately.'

'Suppose you don't pay it,' said Coningsby, smiling.

'If I followed my own impulse, I would remain here,' said Sidonia. 'Can anything be more absurd than that a nation should apply to an individual to maintain its credit, and, with its credit, its existence as an empire, and its comfort as a people; and that individual one to whom its laws deny the proudest rights of citizenship, the privilege of sitting in its senate and of holding land? for though I have been rash enough to buy several estates, my own opinion is, that, by the existing law of England, an Englishman of Hebrew faith cannot possess the soil.'

'But surely it would be easy to repeal a law so illiberal——'

'Oh! as for illiberality, I have no objection to it if it be an element of power. Eschew political sentimentalism. What I contend is, that if you permit men to accumulate property, and they use that per-

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mission to a great extent, power is inseparable from that property, and it is in the last degree impolitic to make it the interest of any powerful class to oppose the institutions under which they live. The Jews, for example, independently of the capital qualities for citizenship which they possess in their industry, temperance, and energy and vivacity of mind, are a race essentially monarchical, deeply religious, and shrinking themselves from converts as from a calamity, are ever anxious to see the religious systems of the countries in which they live flourish; yet, since your society has become agitated in England, and powerful combinations menace your institutions, you find the once loyal Hebrew invariably arrayed in the same ranks as the leveller and the latitudinarian, and prepared to support the policy which may even endanger his life and property, rather than tamely continue under a system which seeks to degrade him. The Tories lose an important election at a critical moment; 'tis the Jews come forward to vote against them. The Church is alarmed at the scheme of a latitudinarian university, and learns with relief that funds are not forthcoming for its establishment; a Jew immediately advances and endows it. Yet the Jews, Coningsby, are essentially Tories. Toryism, indeed, is but copied from the mighty prototype which has fashioned Europe. And every generation they must become more powerful and more dangerous to the society which is hostile to them. Do you think that the quiet humdrum persecution of a decorous representative of an English university can crush those who have successfully baffled the Pharaohs, Nebuchadnezzar, Rome, and the feudal ages? The fact is, you cannot destroy a pure race of the Caucasian

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organisation. It is a physiological fact; a simple law of nature, which has baffled Egyptian and Assyrian Kings, Roman Emperors, and Christian Inquisitors. No penal laws, no physical tortures, can effect that a superior race should be absorbed in an inferior, or be destroyed by it. The mixed persecuting races disappear; the pure persecuted race remains. And at this moment, in spite of centuries, of tens of centuries, of degradation, the Jewish mind exercises a vast influence on the affairs of Europe. I speak not of their laws, which you still obey; of their literature, with which your minds are saturated; but of the living Hebrew intellect.

'You never observe a great intellectual movement in Europe in which the Jews do not greatly participate. The first Jesuits were Jews; that mysterious Russian diplomacy which so alarms Western Europe is organised and principally carried on by Jews; that mighty revolution which is at this moment preparing in Germany, and which will be, in fact, a second and greater Reformation, and of which so little is as yet known in England, is entirely developing under the auspices of Jews, who almost monopolise the professorial chairs of Germany. Neander, the founder of spiritual christianity, who is Regius Professor of Divinity in the University of Berlin, is a Jew. Benary, equally famous, and in the same University, is a Jew. Wehl, the Arabic Professor of Heidelberg, is a Jew. Years ago, when I was in Palestine, I met a German student who was accumulating materials for the History of Christianity, and studying the genius of the place; a modest and learned man. It was Wehl; then unknown, since become the first Arabic scholar of the day, and the author of the life of Mahomet. But

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for the German professors of this race, their name is legion. I think there are more than ten at Berlin alone.

'I told you just now that I was going up to town to-morrow, because I always made it a rule to interpose when affairs of State were on the carpet. Otherwise, I never interfere. I hear of peace and war in newspapers, but I am never alarmed, except when I am informed that the Sovereigns want treasure; then I know that monarchs are serious.

'A few years back we were applied to by Russia. Now, there has been no friendship between the Court of St. Petersburg and my family. It has Dutch connections, which have generally supplied it; and our representations in favour of the Polish Hebrews, a numerous race, but the most suffering and degraded of all the tribes, have not been very agreeable to the Czar. However, circumstances drew to an approximation between the Romanoffs and the Sidonias. I resolved to go myself to St. Petersburg. I had, on my arrival, an interview with the Russian Minister of Finance, Count Cancrin; I beheld the son of a Lithuanian Jew. The loan was connected with the affairs of Spain; I resolved on repairing to Spain from Russia. I travelled without intermission. I had an audience immediately on my arrival with the Spanish Minister, Señor Mendizabel; I beheld one like myself, the son of a Nuevo Christiano, a Jew of Arragon. In consequence of what transpired at Madrid, I went straight to Paris to consult the President of the French Council; I beheld the son of a French Jew, a hero, an imperial marshal, and very properly so, for who should be military heroes if not those who worship the Lord of Hosts?'

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'And is Soult a Hebrew?'

'Yes, and others of the French marshals, and the most famous; Massena, for example; his real name was Manasseh: but to my anecdote. The consequence of our consultations was, that some Northern power should be applied to in a friendly and mediative capacity. We fixed on Prussia; and the President of the Council made an application to the Prussian Minister, who attended a few days after our conference. Count Arnim entered the cabinet, and I beheld a Prussian Jew. So you see, my dear Coningsby, that the world is governed by very different personages from what is imagined by those who are not behind the scenes.'

'You startle, and deeply interest me.'

'You must study physiology, my dear child. Pure races of Caucasus may be persecuted, but they cannot be despised, except by the brutal ignorance of some mongrel breed, that brandishes fagots and howls extermination, but is itself exterminated without persecution, by that irresistible law of Nature which is fatal to curs.'

'But I come also from Caucasus,' said Coningsby.

'Verily; and thank your Creator for such a destiny: and your race is sufficiently pure. You come from the shores of the Northern Sea, land of the blue eye, and the golden hair, and the frank brow: 'tis a famous breed, with whom we Arabs have contended long; from whom we have suffered much: but these Goths, and Saxons, and Normans were doubtless great men.'

'But so favoured by Nature, why has not your race produced great poets, great orators, great writers?'

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'Favoured by Nature and by Nature's God, we produced the lyre of David; we gave you Isaiah and Ezekiel; they are our Olynthians, our Philippics. Favoured by Nature we still remain: but in exact proportion as we have been favoured by Nature we have been persecuted by man. After a thousand struggles; after acts of heroic courage that Rome has never equalled; deeds of divine patriotism that Athens, and Sparta, and Carthage have never excelled; we have endured fifteen hundred years of supernatural slavery, during which every device that can degrade or destroy man has been the destiny that we have sustained and baffled. The Hebrew child has entered adolescence only to learn that he was the pariah of that ungrateful Europe that owes to him the best part of its laws, a fine portion of its literature, all its religion. Great poets require a public; we have been content with the immortal melodies that we sung more than two thousand years ago by the waters of Babylon and wept. They record our triumphs; they solace our affliction. Great orators are the creatures of popular assemblies; we were permitted only by stealth to meet even in our temples. And as for great writers, the catalogue is not blank. What are all the schoolmen, Aquinas himself, to Maimonides? And as for modern philosophy, all springs from Spinoza.

'But the passionate and creative genius, that is the nearest link to Divinity, and which no human tyranny can destroy, though it can divert it; that should have stirred the hearts of nations by its inspired sympathy, or governed senates by its burning eloquence; has found a medium for its expression to which, in spite of your prejudices and your evil passions, you have been obliged to bow. The ear, the

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voice, the fancy teeming with combinations, the imagination fervent with picture and emotion, that came from Caucasus, and which we have preserved unpolluted, have endowed us with almost the exclusive privilege of Music; that science of harmonious sounds, which the ancients recognised as most divine, and deified in the person of their most beautiful creation. I speak not of the past; though, were I to enter into the history of the lords of melody, you would find it the annals of Hebrew genius. But at this moment even, musical Europe is ours. There is not a company of singers, not an orchestra in a single capital, that is not crowded with our children under the feigned names which they adopt to conciliate the dark aversion which your posterity will some day disclaim with shame and disgust. Almost every great composer, skilled musician, almost every voice that ravishes you with its transporting strains, springs from our tribes. The catalogue is too vast to enumerate; too illustrious to dwell for a moment on secondary names, however eminent. Enough for us that the three great creative minds to whose exquisite inventions all nations at this moment yield, Rossini, Meyerbeer, Mendelssohn, are of Hebrew race; and little do your men of fashion, your muscadins of Paris, and your dandies of London, as they thrill into raptures at the notes of a Pasta or a Grisi, little do they suspect that they are offering their homage to "the sweet singers of Israel!"'

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CHAPTER XXXVIII.

The Parting.

IT WAS the noon of the day on which Sidonia was to leave the Castle. The wind was high; the vast white clouds scudded over the blue heavens; the leaves yet green, and tender branches snapped like glass, were whirled in eddies from the trees; the grassy sward undulated like the ocean with a thousand tints and shadows. From the window of the music-room Lucretia Colonna gazed on the turbulent sky.

The heaven of her heart, too, was disturbed.

She turned from the agitated external world to ponder over her inward emotion. She uttered a deep sigh.

Slowly she moved towards her harp; wildly, almost unconsciously, she touched with one hand its strings, while her eyes were fixed on the ground. An imperfect melody resounded; yet plaintive and passionate. It seemed to attract her soul. She raised her head, and then, touching the strings with both her hands, she poured forth tones of deep, yet thrilling power.

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I am a stranger in the halls of a stranger! Ah! whither shall I flee?
To the castle of my fathers in the green mountains; to the palace of my fathers in the ancient city?
There is no flag on the castle of my fathers in the green mountains; silent is the palace of my fathers in the ancient city.
Is there no home for the homeless? Can the unloved never find love?
Ah! thou fliest away fleet cloud: he will leave us swifter than thee! Alas! cutting wind, thy breath is not so cold as his heart!
I am a stranger in the halls of a stranger! Ah! whither shall I flee?

The door of the music-room slowly opened. It was Sidonia. His hat was in his hand; he was evidently on the point of departure.

'Those sounds assured me,' he said calmly but kindly, as he advanced, 'that I might find you here, on which I scarcely counted at so early an hour.'

'You are going then?' said the Princess.

'My carriage is at the door; the Marquess has delayed me; I must be in London to-night. I conclude more abruptly than I could have wished one of the most agreeable visits I ever made; and I hope you will permit me to express to you how much I am indebted to you for a society which those should deem themselves fortunate who can more frequently enjoy.'

He held forth his hand; she extended hers, cold as marble, which he bent over, but did not press to his lips.

'Lord Monmouth talks of remaining here some time,' he observed; 'but I suppose next year, if not this, we shall all meet in some city of the earth?'

Lucretia bowed; and Sidonia, with a graceful reverence, withdrew.

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The Princess Lucretia stood for some moments motionless; a sound attracted her to the window; she perceived the equipage of Sidonia whirling along the winding roads of the park. She watched it till it disappeared; then quitting the window, she threw herself into a chair, and buried her face in her shawl.

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CHAPTER XXXIX.

Coningsby at Cambridge.

N UNIVERSITY life did not bring to Coningsby that feeling of emancipation usually experienced by freshmen. The contrast between school and college life is perhaps, under any circumstances, less striking to the Etonian than to others: he has been prepared for becoming his own master by the liberty wisely entrusted to him in his boyhood, and which is, in general, discreetly exercised. But there were also other reasons why Coningsby should have been less impressed with the novelty of his life, and have encountered less temptations than commonly are met with in the new existence which an University opens to youth. In the interval which had elapsed between quitting Eton and going to Cambridge, brief as the period may comparatively appear, Coningsby had seen much of the world. Three or four months, indeed, may not seem, at the first blush, a course of time which can very materially influence the formation of character; but time must not be counted by calendars, but by sensations, by thought. Coningsby had

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felt a good deal, reflected more. He had encountered a great number of human beings, offering a vast variety of character for his observation. It was not merely manners, but even the intellectual and moral development of the human mind, which in a great degree, unconsciously to himself, had been submitted to his study and his scrutiny. New trains of ideas had been opened to him; his mind was teeming with suggestions. The horizon of his intelligence had insensibly expanded. He perceived that there were other opinions in the world besides those to which he had been habituated. The depths of his intellect had been stirred. He was a wiser man.

He distinguished three individuals whose acquaintance had greatly influenced his mind; Eustace Lyle, the elder Millbank, above all, Sidonia. He curiously meditated over the fact that three English subjects, one of them a principal landed proprietor, another one of the most eminent manufacturers, and the third the greatest capitalist in the kingdom, all of them men of great intelligence, and doubtless of a high probity and conscience, were in their hearts disaffected with the political constitution of the country. Yet, unquestionably, these were the men among whom we ought to seek for some of our first citizens. What, then, was this repulsive quality in those institutions which we persisted in calling national, and which once were so? Here was a great question.

There was another reason, also, why Coningsby should feel a little fastidious among his new habits, and, without being aware of it, a little depressed. For three or four months, and for the first time in his life, he had passed his time in the continual society of refined and charming women. It is an acquaintance

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which, when habitual, exercises a great influence over the tone of the mind, even if it does not produce any more violent effects. It refines the taste, quickens the perception, and gives, as it were, a grace and flexibility to the intellect. Coningsby in his solitary rooms arranging his books, sighed when he recalled the Lady Everinghams and the Lady Theresas; the gracious Duchess; the frank, good-natured Madame Colonna; that deeply interesting enigma, the Princess Lucretia; and the gentle Flora. He thought with disgust of the impending dissipation of an University, which could only be an exaggeration of their coarse frolics at school. It seemed rather vapid, this mighty Cambridge, over which they had so often talked in the playing fields of Eton, with such anticipations of its vast and absorbing interest. And those university honours that once were the great object of his aspirations, they did not figure in that grandeur with which they once haunted his imagination.

What Coningsby determined to conquer was knowledge. He had watched the influence of Sidonia in society with an eye of unceasing vigilance. Coningsby perceived that all yielded to him; that Lord Monmouth even, who seemed to respect none, gave place to his intelligence; appealed to him, listened to him, was guided by him. What was the secret of this influence? Knowledge. On all subjects his views were prompt and clear, and this not more from his native sagacity and reach of view than from the aggregate of facts which rose to guide his judgment and illustrate his meaning, from all countries and all ages, instantly at his command.

The friends of Coningsby were now hourly arriving. It seemed when he met them again, that they

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had all suddenly become men since they had separated; Buckhurst especially. He had been at Paris, and returned with his mind very much opened, and trousers made quite in a new style. All his thoughts were, how soon he could contrive to get back again; and he told them endless stories of actresses and dinners at fashionable *cafés*. Vere enjoyed Cambridge most, because he had been staying with his family since he quitted Eton. Henry Sydney was full of church architecture, national sports, restoration of the order of the peasantry, and was to maintain a constant correspondence on these and similar subjects with Eustace Lyle. Finally, however, they all fell into a very fair, regular, routine life. They all read a little, but not with the enthusiasm which they had once projected. Buckhurst drove four-in-hand, and they all of them sometimes assisted him; but not immoderately. Their suppers were sometimes gay, but never outrageous; and, among all of them, the school friendship was maintained unbroken, and even undisturbed.

The fame of Coningsby preceded him at Cambridge. No man ever went up from whom more was expected in every way. The dons awaited a sucking member for the University, the undergraduates were prepared to welcome a new Alcibiades. He was neither: neither a prig nor a profligate; but a quiet, gentlemanlike, yet spirited young man, gracious to all, but intimate only with his old friends, and giving always an impression in his general tone that his soul was not absorbed in his University.

And yet, perhaps, he might have been coddled into a prig, or flattered into a profligate, had it not been for the intervening experience which he had

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gained between his school and college life. That had visibly impressed upon him, what before he had only faintly acquired from books, that there was a greater and more real world awaiting him, than to be found in those bowers of Academus to which youth is apt at first to attribute an exaggerated importance. A world of action and passion, of power and peril; a world for which a great preparation was indeed necessary, severe and profound, but not altogether such an one as was now offered to him. Yet this want must be supplied, and by himself. Coningsby had already acquirements sufficiently considerable, with some formal application, to ensure him at all times his degree. He was no longer engrossed by the intention he once proudly entertained of trying for honours, and he chalked out for himself that range of reading, which, digested by his thought, should furnish him in some degree with that various knowledge of the history of man to which he aspired. No, we must not for a moment believe that accident could have long diverted the course of a character so strong. The same desire that prevented the Castle of his grandfather from proving a Castle of Indolence to him, that saved him from a too early initiation into the seductive distractions of a refined and luxurious society, would have preserved Coningsby from the puerile profligacy of a college life, or from being that idol of private tutors, a young pedant. It was that noble ambition, the highest and the best, that must be born in the heart and organised in the brain, which will not let a man be content, unless his intellectual power is recognised by his race, and desires that it should contribute to their welfare. It is the heroic feeling; the feeling that in old days produced demi-

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gods; without which no State is safe; without which political institutions are meat without salt; the Crown a bauble, the Church an establishment, Parliaments debating-clubs, and civilisation itself but a fitful and transient dream.

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CHAPTER XL.

The Young Queen.

ESS than a year after the arrival of Coningsby at Cambridge, and which he had only once quitted in the interval, and that to pass a short time in Berkshire with his friend Buckhurst, occurred the death of King William IV. This event necessarily induced a dissolution of the Parliament, elected under the auspices of Sir Robert Peel in 1834, and after the publication of the Tamworth Manifesto.

The death of the King was a great blow to what had now come to be generally styled the 'Conservative Cause.' It was quite unexpected; within a fortnight of his death, eminent persons still believed that 'it was only the hay-fever.' Had his Majesty lived until after the then impending registration, the Whigs would have been again dismissed. Nor is there any doubt that, under these circumstances, the Conservative cause would have secured for the new ministers a Parliamentary majority. What would have been the consequences to the country, if the four years of Whig rule, from 1837 to 1841, had not occurred? It is easier to decide what would have been the consequences to the Whigs. Some of their great friends

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might have lacked blue ribbons and lord-lieutenancies, and some of their little friends comfortable places in the customs and excise. They would have lost, undoubtedly, the distribution of four years' patronage; we can hardly say the exercise of four years' power; but they would have existed at this moment as the most powerful and popular Opposition that ever flourished in this country, if, indeed, the course of events had not long ere this carried them back to their old posts in a proud and intelligible position. The Reform Bill did not do more injury to the Tories than the attempt to govern this country without a decided Parliamentary majority did the Whigs. The greatest of all evils is a weak government. They cannot carry good measures; they are forced to carry bad ones.

The death of the King was a great blow to the Conservative cause; that is to say, it darkened the brow of Tadpole, quailed the heart of Taper, crushed all the rising hopes of those numerous statesmen who believe the country must be saved if they receive twelve hundred a year. It is a peculiar class, that; 1,200*l.* per annum, paid quarterly, is their idea of political science and human nature. To receive 1,200*l.* per annum is government; to try to receive 1,200*l.* per annum is opposition; to wish to receive 1,200*l.* per annum is ambition. If a man wants to get into Parliament, and does not want to get 1,200*l.* per annum, they look upon him as daft; as a benighted being. They stare in each other's face, and ask, 'What can * * * * * want to get into Parliament for? They have no conception that public reputation is a motive power, and with many men the greatest. They have as much idea of fame or celebrity, even of the mas-

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culine impulse of an honourable pride, as eunuchs of manly joys.

The twelve-hundred-a-yearers were in despair about the King's death. Their loyal souls were sorely grieved that his gracious Majesty had not outlived the Registration. All their happy inventions about 'hay-fever,' circulated in confidence, and sent by post to chairmen of Conservative Associations, followed by a royal funeral! General election about to take place with the old registration; government boroughs against them, and the young Queen for a cry. What a cry! Youth, beauty, and a Queen! Taper grew pale at the thought. What could they possibly get up to countervail it? Even Church and Corn-laws together would not do; and then Church was sulky, for the Conservative cause had just made it a present of a commission, and all that the country gentlemen knew of Conservatism was, that it would not repeal the Malt Tax, and had made them repeal their pledges. Yet a cry must be found. A dissolution without a cry, in the Taper philosophy, would be a world without a sun. A rise might be got by 'Independence of the House of Lords;' and Lord Lyndhurst's summaries might be well circulated at one penny per hundred, large discount allowed to Conservative Associations, and endless credit. Tadpole, however, was never very fond of the House of Lords; besides, it was too limited. Tadpole wanted the young Queen brought in; the rogue! At length, one morning, Taper came up to him with a slip of paper, and a smile of complacent austerity on his dull visage, 'I think, Mr. Tadpole, that will do!'

Tadpole took the paper and read, 'OUR YOUNG QUEEN AND OUR OLD INSTITUTIONS.'

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The eyes of Tadpole sparkled as if they had met a gnomic sentence of Periander or Thales; then turning to Taper, he said,

'What do you think of "ancient," instead of "old"?'

'You cannot have "Our modern Queen and our ancient Institutions,"' said Mr. Taper.

The dissolution was soon followed by an election for the borough of Cambridge. The Conservative cause candidate was an old Etonian. That was a bond of sympathy which imparted zeal even to those who were a little sceptical of the essential virtues of Conservatism. Every under-graduate especially who remembered 'the distant spires,' became enthusiastic. Buckhurst took a very decided part. He cheered, he canvassed, he brought men to the polls whom none could move; he influenced his friends and his companions. Even Coningsby caught the contagion, and Vere, who had imbibed much of Coningsby's political sentiment, prevailed on himself to be neutral. The Conservative cause triumphed in the person of its Eton champion. The day the member was chaired, several men in Coningsby's rooms were talking over their triumph.

'By Jove!' said the panting Buckhurst, throwing himself on the sofa, 'it was well done; never was any thing better done. An immense triumph! The greatest triumph the Conservative cause has had. And yet,' he added, laughing, 'if any fellow were to ask me what the Conservative cause is, I am sure I should not know what to say.'

'Why, it is the cause of our glorious institutions,' said Coningsby. 'A Crown robbed of its prerogatives; a Church controlled by a commission; and an aristocracy that does not lead.'

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'Under whose genial influence the order of the peasantry, "a country's pride," has vanished from the face of the land,' said Henry Sydney, 'and is succeeded by a race of serfs, who are called labourers, and who burn ricks.'

'Under which,' continued Coningsby, 'the Crown has become a cipher; the Church a sect; the nobility drones; and the people drudges.'

'It is the great constitutional cause,' said Lord Vere, 'that refuses everything to opposition; yields everything to agitation; conservative in Parliament, destructive out-of-doors; that has no objection to any change provided only it be effected by unauthorised means.'

'The first public association of men,' said Coningsby, 'who have worked for an avowed end without enunciating a single principle.'

'And who have established political infidelity throughout the land,' said Lord Henry.

'By Jove!' said Buckhurst, 'what infernal fools we have made ourselves this last week!'

'Nay,' said Coningsby, smiling, 'it was our last schoolboy weakness. *Floreat Etona,* under all circumstances.'

'I certainly, Coningsby,' said Lord Vere, 'shall not assume the Conservative cause, instead of the cause for which Hampden died in the field, and Sydney on the scaffold.'

'The cause for which Hampden died in the field and Sydney on the scaffold,' said Coningsby, 'was the cause of the Venetian Republic.'

'How, how?' said Buckhurst.

'I repeat it,' said Coningsby. 'The great object of the Whig leaders in England from the first movement under Hampden to the last most successful one in

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1688, was to establish in England a high aristocratic republic on the model of the Venetian, then the study and admiration of all speculative politicians. Read Harrington; turn over Algernon Sydney; then you will see how the minds of the English leaders in the seventeenth century were saturated with the Venetian type. And they at length succeeded. William III. found them out. He told the Whig leaders, "I will not be a Doge." He balanced parties; he baffled them as the Puritans baffled them fifty years before. The reign of Anne was a struggle between the Venetian and the English systems. Two great Whig nobles, Argyle and Somerset, worthy of seats in the Council of Ten, forced their Sovereign on her deathbed to change the ministry. They accomplished their object. They brought in a new family on their own terms. George I. was a Doge; George II. was a Doge; they were what William III., a great man, would not be. George III. tried not to be a Doge, but it was impossible materially to resist the deeply-laid combination. He might get rid of the Whig magnificoes, but he could not rid himself of the Venetian constitution. And a Venetian constitution did govern England from the accession of the House of Hanover until 1832. Now I do not ask you, Vere, to relinquish the political tenets which in ordinary times would have been your inheritance. All I say is, the constitution introduced by your ancestors having been subverted by their descendants your contemporaries, beware of still holding Venetian principles of government when you have not a Venetian constitution to govern with. Do what I am doing, what Henry Sydney and Buckhurst are doing, what other men that I could mention are doing, hold yourself aloof from

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political parties which, from the necessity of things, have ceased to have distinctive principles, and are therefore practically only factions; and wait and see, whether with patience, energy, honour, and Christian faith, and a desire to look to the national welfare and not to sectional and limited interests; whether, I say, we may not discover some great principles to guide us, to which we may adhere, and which then, if true, will ultimately guide and control others.'

'The Whigs are worn out,' said Vere, 'Conservatism is a sham, and Radicalism is pollution.'

'I certainly,' said Buckhurst, 'when I get into the House of Commons, shall speak my mind without reference to any party whatever; and all I hope is, we may all come in at the same time, and then we may make a party of our own.'

'I have always heard my father say,' said Vere, 'that there was nothing so difficult as to organise an independent party in the House of Commons.'

'Ay! but that was in the Venetian period, Vere,' said Henry Sydney, smiling.

'I dare say,' said Buckhurst, 'the only way to make a party in the House of Commons is just the one that succeeds anywhere else. Men must associate together. When you are living in the same set, dining together every day, and quizzing the Dons, it is astonishing how well men agree. As for me, I never would enter into a conspiracy, unless the conspirators were fellows who had been at Eton with me; and then there would be no treachery.'

'Let us think of principles, and not of parties,' said Coningsby.

'For my part,' said Buckhurst, 'whenever a political system is breaking up, as in this country at

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present, I think the very best thing is to brush all the old Dons off the stage. They never take to the new road kindly. They are always hampered by their exploded prejudices and obsolete traditions. I don't think a single man, Vere, that sat in the Venetian Senate ought to be allowed to sit in the present English House of Commons.'

'Well, no one does in our family except my uncle Philip,' said Lord Henry; 'and the moment I want it, he will resign; for he detests Parliament. It interferes so with his hunting.'

'Well, we all have fair parliamentary prospects,' said Buckhurst. 'That is something. I wish we were in now.'

'Heaven forbid!' said Coningsby. 'I tremble at the responsibility of a seat at any time. With my present unsettled and perplexed views, there is nothing from which I should recoil so much as the House of Commons.'

'I quite agree with you,' said Henry Sydney. 'The best thing we can do is to keep as clear of political party as we possibly can. How many men waste the best part of their lives in painfully apologising for conscientious deviation from a parliamentary course which they adopted when they were boys, without thought, or prompted by some local connection, or interest, to secure a seat.'

It was the midnight following the morning when this conversation took place, that Coningsby, alone, and having just quitted a rather boisterous party of wassailers who had been celebrating at Buckhurst's rooms the triumph of 'Eton Statesmen,' if not of Conservative principles, stopped in the precincts of that Royal College that reminded him of his school-

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days, to cool his brow in the summer air, that even at that hour was soft, and to calm his mind in the contemplation of the still, the sacred, and the beauteous scene that surrounded him.

There rose that fane, the pride and boast of Cambridge, not unworthy to rank among the chief temples of Christendom. Its vast form was exaggerated in the uncertain hour; part shrouded in the deepest darkness, while a flood of silver light suffused its southern side, distinguished with revealing beam the huge ribs of its buttresses, and bathed with mild lustre its airy pinnacles.

'Where is the spirit that raised these walls?' thought Coningsby. 'Is it indeed extinct? Is then this civilisation, so much vaunted, inseparable from moderate feelings and little thoughts? If so, give me back barbarism! But I cannot believe it. Man that is made in the image of the Creator, is made for God-like deeds. Come what come may, I will cling to the heroic principle. It can alone satisfy my soul.'

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CHAPTER XLI.

A Shocking Accident.

WE MUST now revert to the family, or rather the household, of Lord Monmouth, in which considerable changes and events had occurred since the visit of Coningsby to the Castle in the preceding autumn.

In the first place, the earliest frost of the winter had carried off the aged proprietor of Hellingsley, that contiguous estate which Lord Monmouth so much coveted, the possession of which was indeed one of the few objects of his life, and to secure which he was prepared to pay far beyond its intrinsic value, great as that undoubtedly was. Yet Lord Monmouth did not become its possessor. Long as his mind had been intent upon the subject, skilful as had been his combinations to secure his prey, and unlimited the means which were to achieve his purpose, another stepped in, and without his privity, without even the consolation of a struggle, stole away the prize; and this too a man whom he hated, almost the only individual out of his own family that he did hate; a man who had crossed him before in similar enterprises; who was his avowed foe; had lavished treasure to

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oppose him in elections; raised associations against his interest, established journals to assail him; denounced him in public; agitated against him in private; had declared more than once that he would make 'the county too hot for him;' his personal, inveterate, indomitable foe, Mr. Millbank of Millbank.

The loss of Hellingsley was a bitter disappointment to Lord Monmouth; but the loss of it to such an adversary touched him to the quick. He did not seek to control his anger; he could not succeed even in concealing his agitation. He threw upon Rigby that glance so rare with him, but under which men always quailed; that play of the eye which Lord Monmouth shared in common with Henry VIII., that struck awe into the trembling Commons when they had given an obnoxious vote, as the King entered the gallery of his palace, and looked around him.

It was a look which implied that dreadful question, 'Why have I bought you, that such things should happen? Why have I unlimited means and unscrupulous agents?' It made even Rigby feel; even his brazen tones were hushed.

To fly from everything disagreeable was the practical philosophy of Lord Monmouth; but he was as brave as he was sensual. He would not shrink before the new proprietor of Hellingsley. He therefore remained at the Castle with an aching heart, and redoubled his hospitalities. An ordinary mind might have been soothed by the unceasing consideration and the skilful and delicate flattery that ever surrounded Lord Monmouth; but his sagacious intelligence was never for a moment the dupe of his vanity. He had no self-love, and as he valued no one, there were really no feelings to play upon. He saw through ev-

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erybody and everything; and when he had detected their purpose, discovered their weakness or their vileness, he calculated whether they could contribute to his pleasure or his convenience in a degree that counterbalanced the objections which might be urged against their intentions, or their less pleasing and profitable qualities. To be pleased was always a principal object with Lord Monmouth; but when a man wants vengeance, gay amusement is not exactly a satisfactory substitute.

A month elapsed. Lord Monmouth with a serene or smiling visage to his guests, but in private taciturn and morose, scarcely ever gave a word to Mr. Rigby, but continually bestowed on him glances which painfully affected the appetite of that gentleman. In a hundred ways it was intimated to Mr. Rigby that he was not a welcome guest, and yet something was continually given him to do which rendered it impossible for him to take his departure. In this state of affairs, another event occurred which changed the current of feeling, and by its possible consequences distracted the Marquess from his brooding meditations over his discomfiture in the matter of Hellingsley. The Prince Colonna, who, since the steeple-chase, had imbibed a morbid predilection for such amusements, and indeed for every species of rough-riding, was thrown from his horse and killed on the spot.

This calamity broke up the party at Coningsby, which was not at the moment very numerous. Mr. Rigby, by command, instantly seized the opportunity of preventing the arrival of other guests who were expected. This catastrophe was the cause of Mr. Rigby resuming in a great measure his old position in the Castle. There were a great many things to be

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done, and all disagreeable; he achieved them all, and studied everybody's convenience. Coroners' inquests, funerals especially, weeping women, these were all spectacles which Lord Monmouth could not endure, but he was so high-bred that he would not for the world that there should be in manner or degree the slightest deficiency in propriety or even sympathy. But he wanted somebody to do everything that was proper; to be considerate and consoling and sympathetic. Mr. Rigby did it all; gave evidence at the inquest, was chief mourner at the funeral, and arranged everything so well that not a single emblem of death crossed the sight of Lord Monmouth; while Madame Colonna found submission in his exhortations, and the Princess Lucretia, a little more pale and pensive than usual, listened with tranquillity to his discourse on the vanity of all sublunary things.

When the tumult had subsided, and habits and feelings had fallen into their old routine and relapsed into their ancient channels, the Marquess proposed that they should all return to London, and with great formality, though with warmth, begged that Madame Colonna would ever consider his roof as her own. All were glad to quit the Castle, which now presented a scene so different from its former animation, and Madame Colonna, weeping, accepted the hospitality of her friend, until the impending expansion of the spring would permit her to return to Italy. This notice of her return to her own country seemed to occasion the Marquess great disquietude.

After they had remained about a month in London, Madame Colonna sent for Mr. Rigby one morning to tell him how very painful it was to her feelings to remain under the roof of Monmouth House

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without the sanction of a husband; that the circumstance of being a foreigner, under such unusual affliction, might have excused, though not authorised, the step at first, and for a moment; but that the continuance of such a course was quite out of the question; that she owed it to herself, to her step-child, no longer to trespass on this friendly hospitality, which, if persisted in, might be liable to misconstruction. Mr. Rigby listened with great attention to this statement, and never in the least interrupted Madame Colonna; and then offered to do that which he was convinced the lady desired, namely, to make the Marquess acquainted with the painful state of her feelings. This he did according to his fashion, and with sufficient dexterity. Mr. Rigby himself was anxious to know which way the wind blew, and the mission with which he had been entrusted fell in precisely with his inclinations and necessities. The Marquess listened to the communication and sighed, then turned gently round and surveyed himself in the mirror and sighed again, then said to Rigby:

'You understand exactly what I mean, Rigby. It is quite ridiculous their going, and infinitely distressing to me. They must stay.'

Rigby repaired to the Princess full of mysterious bustle, and with a face beaming with importance and satisfaction. He made much of the two sighs; fully justified the confidence of the Marquess in his comprehension of unexplained intentions; prevailed on Madame Colonna to have some regard for the feelings of one so devoted; expatiated on the insignificance of worldly misconstructions, when replied to by such honourable intentions; and fully succeeded in his mission. They did stay. Month after month rolled

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on, and still they stayed; every month all the family becoming more resigned or more content, and more cheerful. As for the Marquess himself, Mr. Rigby never remembered him more serene and even joyous. His Lordship scarcely ever entered general society. The Colonna family remained in strict seclusion; and he preferred the company of these accomplished and congenial friends to the mob of the great world.

Between Madame Colonna and Mr. Rigby there had always subsisted considerable confidence. Now, that gentleman seemed to have achieved fresh and greater claims to her regard. In the pleasure with which he looked forward to her approaching alliance with his patron, he reminded her of the readiness with which he had embraced her suggestions for the marriage of her daughter with Coningsby. Always obliging, she was never wearied of chanting his praises to her noble admirer, who was apparently much gratified she should have bestowed her esteem on one of whom she would necessarily in after-life see so much. It is seldom the lot of husbands that their confidential friends gain the regards of their brides.

'I am glad you all like Rigby,' said Lord Monmouth, 'as you will see so much of him.'

The remembrance of the Hellingsley failure seemed to be erased from the memory of the Marquess. Rigby never recollected him more cordial and confidential, and more equable in his manner. He told Rigby one day that he wished that Monmouth House should possess the most sumptuous and the most fanciful boudoir in London or Paris. What a hint for Rigby! That gentleman consulted the first artists, and gave them some hints in return; his researches

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on domestic decoration ranged through all ages; he even meditated a rapid tour to mature his inventions; but his confidence in his native taste and genius ultimately convinced him that this movement was unnecessary.

The summer advanced; the death of the King occurred; the dissolution summoned Rigby to Coningsby and the borough of Darlford. His success was marked certain in the secret books of Tadpole and Taper. A manufacturing town, enfranchised under the Reform Act, already gained by the Conservative cause! Here was reaction; here influence of property! Influence of character, too; for no one was so popular as Lord Monmouth; a most distinguished nobleman of strict Conservative principles, who, if he carried the county and the manufacturing borough also, merited the strawberry-leaf.

'There will be no holding Rigby,' said Taper; 'I'm afraid he will be looking for something very high.'

'The higher the better,' rejoined Tadpole, 'and then he will not interfere with us. I like your high-flyers; it is your plodders I detest, wearing old hats and high-lows, speaking in committee, and thinking they are men of business: d—n them!'

Rigby went down, and made some impressive speeches; at least they read very well in some of his second-rate journals, where all the uproar figured as loud cheering, and the interruption of a cabbage-stalk was represented as a question from some intelligent individual in the crowd. The fact is, Rigby bored his audience too much with history, especially with the French Revolution, which he fancied was his 'forte,' so that the people at last, whenever he made any al-

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lusion to the subject, were almost as much terrified as if they had seen the guillotine.

Rigby had as yet one great advantage; he had no opponent; and without personal opposition no contest can be very bitter. It was for some days Rigby *versus* Liberal principles; and Rigby had much the best of it; for he abused Liberal principles roundly in his harangues, who, not being represented on the occasion, made no reply; while plenty of ale, and some capital songs by Lucian Gay, who went down express, gave the right cue to the mob, who declared in chorus, beneath the windows of Rigby's hotel, that he was 'a fine old English gentleman!'

But there was to be a contest; no question about that, and a sharp one, although Rigby was to win, and well. The Liberal party had been so fastidious about their new candidate that they had none ready though several biting. Jawster Sharp thought at one time that sheer necessity would give him another chance still; but even Rigby was preferable to Jawster Sharp, who, finding it would not do, published his long-prepared valedictory address, in which he told his constituents, that having long sacrificed his health to their interests, he was now obliged to retire into the bosom of his family. And a very well-provided-for family, too.

All this time the Liberal deputation from Darlford, two aldermen, three town-councillors, and the secretary of the Reform Association, were walking about London like mad things, eating luncheons and looking for a candidate. They called at the Reform Club twenty times in the morning, badgered whips and red-tapers; were introduced to candidates, badgered candidates; examined would-be members as if they

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were at a cattle-show, listened to political pedigrees, dictated political pledges, referred to Hansard to see how men had voted, inquired whether men had spoken, finally discussed terms. But they never could hit the right man. If the principles were right, there was no money; and if money were ready, money would not take pledges. In fact, they wanted a Phœnix: a very rich man, who would do exactly as they liked, with extremely low opinions and with very high connections.

'If he would go for the ballot and had a handle to his name, it would have the best effect,' said the secretary of the Reform Association, 'because you see we are fighting against a Right Honourable, and you have no idea how that takes with the mob.'

The deputation had been three days in town, and urged by despatches by every train to bring affairs to a conclusion; jaded, perplexed, confused, they were ready to fall into the hands of the first jobber or bold adventurer. They discussed over their dinner at a Strand coffee-house the claims of the various candidates who had presented themselves. Mr. Donald Macpherson Macfarlane, who would only pay the legal expenses; he was soon despatched. Mr. Gingerly Browne, of Jermyn Street, the younger son of a baronet, who would go as far as 1000*l.* provided the seat was secured. Mr. Juggins, a distiller, 2000*l.* man; but would not agree to any annual subscriptions. Sir Baptist Placid, vague about expenditure, but repeatedly declaring that 'there could be no difficulty on that head.' He however had a moral objection to subscribing to the races, and that was a great point at Darlford. Sir Baptist would subscribe a guinea per annum to the Infirmary, and the same to

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all religious societies without any distinction of sects; but races — it was not the sum, 100*l.* per annum, but the principle. He had a moral objection.

In short, the deputation began to suspect, what was the truth, that they were a day after the fair, and that all the electioneering rips that swarm in the purlieus of political clubs during an impending dissolution of Parliament, men who become political characters in their small circle because they have been talked of as once having an intention to stand for places for which they never offered themselves, or for having stood for places where they never could by any circumstance have succeeded, were in fact nibbling at their dainty morsel.

At this moment of despair, a ray of hope was imparted to them by a confidential note from a secretary of the Treasury, who wished to see them at the Reform Club on the morrow. You may be sure they were punctual to their appointment. The secretary received them with great consideration. He had got them a candidate, and one of high mark, the son of a Peer, and connected with the highest Whig houses. Their eyes sparkled. A real honourable. If they liked he would introduce them immediately to the Honourable Alberic de Crécy. He had only to introduce them, as there was no difficulty either as to means or opinions, expenses or pledges.

The secretary returned with a young gentleman, whose diminutive stature would seem, from his smooth and singularly puerile countenance, to be merely the consequence of his very tender years; but Mr. de Crécy was really of age, or at least would be by nomination-day. He did not say a word, but looked like the rosebud which dangled in the button-hole of

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his frock-coat. The aldermen and town-councillors were what is sometimes emphatically styled flabbergasted; they were speechless from bewilderment. 'Mr. de Crécy will go for the ballot,' said the secretary of the Treasury, with an audacious eye and a demure look, 'and for Total and Immediate, if you press him hard; but don't, if you can help it, because he has an uncle, an old county member, who has prejudices, and might disinherit him. However, we answer for him. And I am very happy that I have been the means of bringing about an arrangement which, I feel, will be mutually advantageous.' And so saying, the secretary effected his escape.

Circumstances, however, retarded for a season the political career of the Honourable Alberic de Crécy. While the Liberal party at Darlford were suffering under the daily inflictions of Mr. Rigby's slashing style, and the post brought them very unsatisfactory prospects of a champion, one offered himself, and in an address which intimated that he was no man of straw, likely to recede from any contest in which he chose to embark. The town was suddenly placarded with a letter to the Independent Electors from Mr. Millbank, the new proprietor of Hellingsley.

He expressed himself as one not anxious to obtrude himself on their attention, and founding no claim to their confidence on his recent acquisition; but at the same time as one resolved that the free and enlightened community, with which he must necessarily hereafter be much connected, should not become the nomination borough of any Peer of the realm without a struggle, if they chose to make one. And so he offered himself if they could not find a better candidate, without waiting for the ceremony of

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a requisition. He was exactly the man they wanted; and though he had 'no handle to his name,' and was somewhat impracticable about pledges, his fortune was so great, and his character so high, that it might be hoped that the people would be almost as content as if they were appealed to by some obscure scion of factitious nobility, subscribing to political engagements which he could not comprehend, and which, in general, are vomited with as much facility as they are swallowed.

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CHAPTER XLII.

Rigby's Anxieties.

THE people of Darlford, who, as long as the contest for their representation remained between Mr. Rigby and the abstraction called Liberal Principles, appeared to be very indifferent about the result, the moment they learned that for the phrase had been substituted a substance, and that, too, in the form of a gentleman who was soon to figure as their resident neighbour, became excited, speedily enthusiastic. All the bells of all the churches rang when Mr. Millbank commenced his canvass; the Conservatives, on the alert, if not alarmed, insisted on their champion also showing himself in all directions; and in the course of four-and-twenty hours, such is the contagion of popular feeling, the town was divided into two parties, the vast majority of which were firmly convinced that the country could only be saved by the return of Mr. Rigby, or preserved from inevitable destruction by the election of Mr. Millbank.

The results of the two canvasses were such as had been anticipated from the previous reports of the respective agents and supporters. In these days the personal canvass of a candidate is a mere form. The

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whole country that is to be invaded has been surveyed and mapped out before entry; every position reconnoitred; the chain of communications complete. In the present case, as was not unusual, both candidates were really supported by numerous and reputable adherents; and both had good grounds for believing that they would be ultimately successful. But there was a body of the electors sufficiently numerous to turn the election, who would not promise their votes: conscientious men who felt the responsibility of the duty that the constitution had entrusted to their discharge, and who would not make up their minds without duly weighing the respective merits of the two rivals. This class of deeply meditative individuals are distinguished not only by their pensive turn of mind, but by a charitable vein that seems to pervade their being. Not only will they think of your request, but for their parts they wish both sides equally well. Decision, indeed, as it must dash the hopes of one of their solicitors, seems infinitely painful to them; they have always a good reason for postponing it. If you seek their suffrage during the canvass, they reply, that the writ not having come down, the day of election is not yet fixed. If you call again to inform them that the writ has arrived, they rejoin, that perhaps after all there may not be a contest. If you call a third time, half dead with fatigue, to give them friendly notice that both you and your rival have pledged yourselves to go to the polls, they twitch their trousers, rub their hands, and with a dull grin observe,

'Well, sir, we shall see.'

'Come, Mr. Jobson,' says one of the committee, with an insinuating smile, 'give Mr. Millbank one.'

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'Jobson, I think you and I know each other,' says a most influential supporter, with a knowing nod.

'Yes, Mr. Smith, I should think we did.'

'Come, come, give us one.'

'Well, I have not made up my mind yet, gentlemen.'

'Jobson!' says a solemn voice, 'didn't you tell me the other night you wished well to this gentleman?'

'So I do; I wish well to everybody,' replies the imperturbable Jobson.

'Well, Jobson,' exclaims another member of the committee, with a sigh, 'who could have supposed that you would have been an enemy?'

'I don't wish to be no enemy to no man, Mr. Trip.'

'Come, Jobson,' says a jolly tanner, 'if I wanted to be a Parliament man, I don't think you could refuse me one!'

'I don't think I could, Mr. Oakfield.'

'Well, then, give it to my friend.'

'Well, sir, I'll think about it.'

'Leave him to me,' says another member of the committee, with a significant look. 'I know how to get round him. It's all right.'

'Yes, leave him to Hayfield, Mr. Millbank; he knows how to manage him.'

But all the same, Jobson continues to look as little tractable and lamb-like as can be well fancied.

And here, in a work which, in an unpretending shape, aspires to take neither an uninformed nor a partial view of the political history of the ten eventful years of the Reform struggle, we should pause for a moment to observe the strangeness, that only five years after the reconstruction of the electoral body by

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the Whig party, in a borough called into political existence by their policy, a manufacturing town, too, the candidate comprising in his person every quality and circumstance which could recommend him to the constituency, and his opponent the worst specimen of the Old Generation, a political adventurer, who owed the least disreputable part of his notoriety to his opposition to the Reform Bill; that in such a borough, under such circumstances, there should be a contest, and that, too, one of a very doubtful issue.

What was the cause of this? Are we to seek it in the 'Reaction' of the Tadpoles and the Tapers? That would not be a satisfactory solution. Reaction, to a certain extent, is the law of human existence. In the particular state of affairs before us, England after the Reform Act, it never could be doubtful that Time would gradually, and in some instances rapidly, counteract the national impulse of 1832. There never could have been a question, for example, that the English counties would have reverted to their natural allegiance to their proprietors; but the results of the appeals to the third Estate in 1835 and 1837 are not to be accounted for by a mere readjustment of legitimate influences.

The truth is, that, considerable as are the abilities of the Whig leaders, highly accomplished as many of them unquestionably must be acknowledged in parliamentary debate, experienced in council, sedulous in office, eminent as scholars, powerful from their position, the absence of individual influence, and of the pervading authority of a commanding mind, have been the cause of the fall of the Whig party.

Such a supremacy was generally acknowledged in Lord Grey on the accession of his party to power:

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but it was the supremacy of a tradition rather than of a fact. Almost at the outset of his authority his successor was indicated. When the crisis arrived, the intended successor was not in the Whig ranks. It is in this virtual absence of a real and recognised leader, almost from the moment that they passed their great measure, that we must seek a chief cause of all that insubordination, all those distempered ambitions, and all those dark intrigues, that finally broke up, not only the Whig government, but the Whig party; demoralised their ranks, and sent them to the country, both in 1835 and 1837, with every illusion, which had operated so happily in their favour in 1832, scattered to the winds. In all things we trace the irresistible influence of the individual.

And yet the interval that elapsed between 1835 and 1837 proved that there was all this time in the Whig array one entirely competent to the office of leading a great party, though his capacity for that fulfilment was too tardily recognised.

Lord John Russell has that degree of imagination, which, though evinced rather in sentiment than expression, still enables him to generalise from the details of his reading and experience; and to take those comprehensive views, which, however easily depreciated by ordinary men in an age of routine, are indispensable to a statesman in the conjunctures in which we live. He understands, therefore, his position; and he has the moral intrepidity which prompts him ever to dare that which his intellect assures him is politic. He is consequently, at the same time, sagacious and bold in council. As an administrator he is prompt and indefatigable. He is not a natural orator, and labours under physical deficiencies which even a Dem-

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osthenic impulse could scarcely overcome. But he is experienced in debate, quick in reply, fertile in resource, takes large views, and frequently compensates for a dry and hesitating manner by the expression of those noble truths that flash across the fancy, and rise spontaneously to the lip, of men of poetic temperament when addressing popular assemblies. If we add to this, a private life of dignified repute, the accidents of his birth and rank, which never can be severed from the man, the scion of a great historic family, and born, as it were, to the hereditary service of the State, it is difficult to ascertain at what period, or under what circumstances, the Whig party have ever possessed, or could obtain, a more efficient leader.

But we must return to the Darlford election. The class of thoughtful voters was sufficiently numerous in that borough to render the result of the contest doubtful to the last; and on the eve of the day of nomination both parties were equally sanguine.

Nomination-day altogether is an unsatisfactory affair. There is little to be done, and that little mere form. The tedious hours remain, and no one can settle his mind to anything. It is not a holiday, for every one is serious; it is not business, for no one can attend to it; it is not a contest, for there is no canvassing; nor an election, for there is no poll. It is a day of lounging without an object, and luncheons without an appetite; of hopes and fears; confidence and dejection; bravado bets and secret hedging; and, about midnight, of furious suppers of grilled bones, brandy-and-water, and recklessness.

The president and vice-president of the Conservative Association, the secretary and the four solicitors who were agents, had impressed upon Mr. Rigby

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that it was of the utmost importance, and must produce a great moral effect, if he obtained the show of hands. With his powers of eloquence and their secret organisation, they flattered themselves it might be done. With this view, Rigby inflicted a speech of more than two hours' duration on the electors, who bore it very kindly, as the mob likes, above all things, that the ceremonies of nomination-day should not be cut short: moreover, there is nothing that the mob likes so much as a speech. Rigby therefore had, on the whole, a far from unfavourable audience, and he availed himself of their forbearance. He brought in his crack theme, the guillotine, and dilated so elaborately upon its qualities, that one of the gentlemen below could not refrain from exclaiming, 'I wish you may get it.' This exclamation gave Mr. Rigby what is called a great opening, which, like a practised speaker, he immediately seized. He denounced the sentiment as 'un-English,' and got much cheered. Excited by this success, Rigby began to call everything else 'un-English' with which he did not agree, until menacing murmurs began to rise, when he shifted the subject, and rose into a grand peroration, in which he assured them that the eyes of the whole empire were on this particular election; cries of 'That's true,' from all sides; and that England expected every man to do his duty.

'And who do you expect to do yours?' inquired a gentleman below, 'about that ere pension?'

'Rigby,' screeched a hoarse voice, 'don't you mind; you guv it them well.'

'Rigby, keep up your spirits, old chap: we will have you.'

'Now!' said a stentorian voice; and a man as tall

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as Saul looked round him. This was the engaged leader of the Conservative mob; the eye of every one of his minions was instantly on him. 'Now! Our Young Queen and our Old Institutions! Rigby for ever!'

This was a signal for the instant appearance of the leader of the Liberal mob. Magog Wrath, not so tall as Bully Bluck, his rival, had a voice almost as powerful, a back much broader, and a countenance far more forbidding. 'Now, my boys, the Queen and Millbank for ever!'

These rival cries were the signals for a fight between the two bands of gladiators in the face of the hustings, the body of the people little interfering. Bully Bluck seized Magog Wrath's colours; they wrestled, they seized each other; their supporters were engaged in mutual contest; it appeared to be a most alarming and perilous fray; several ladies from the windows screamed, one fainted; a band of special constables pushed their way through the mob; you heard their staves resounding on the skulls of all who opposed them, especially the little boys: order was at length restored; and, to tell the truth, the only hurts inflicted were those which came from the special constables. Bully Bluck and Magog Wrath, with all their fierce looks, flaunting colours, loud cheers, and desperate assaults, were, after all, only a couple of Condottieri, who were cautious never to wound each other. They were, in fact, a peaceful police, who kept the town in awe, and prevented others from being mischievous who were more inclined to do harm. Their hired gangs were the safety-valves for all the scamps of the borough, who, receiving a few shillings per head for their nominal service, and as much

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drink as they liked after the contest, were bribed and organised into peace and sobriety on the days in which their excesses were most to be apprehended.

Now Mr. Millbank came forward: he was brief compared with Mr. Rigby; but clear and terse. No one could misunderstand him. He did not favour his hearers with any history, but gave them his views about taxes, free trade, placemen, and pensioners, whoever and wherever they might be.

'Hilloa, Rigby, about that ere pension?'

'Millbank for ever! We will have him.'

'Never mind, Rigby, you'll come in next time.'

Mr. Millbank was energetic about resident representatives, but did not understand that a resident representative meant the nominee of a great Lord, who lived in a great castle; great cheering. There was a Lord once who declared that, if he liked, he would return his negro valet to Parliament; but Mr. Millbank thought those days were over. It remained for the people of Dalford to determine whether he was mistaken.

'Never!' exclaimed the mob. 'Millbank for ever! Rigby in the river! No niggers, no walets!'

'Three groans for Rigby.'

'His language ain't as purty as the Lunnun chap's,' said a critic below; 'but he speaks from his 'art: and give me the man who 'as got a 'art.'

'That's your time of day, Mr. Robinson.'

'Now!' said Magog Wrath, looking around. 'Now, the Queen and Millbank for ever! Hurrah!'

The show of hands was entirely in favour of Mr. Millbank. Scarcely a hand was held up for Mr. Rigby below, except by Bully Bluck and his prætorians. The Chairman and the Deputy Chairman of the

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Conservative Association, the Secretary, and the four agents, severally and respectively went up to Mr. Rigby and congratulated him on the result, as it was a known fact 'that the show of hands never won.'

The eve of polling-day was now at hand. This is the most critical period of an election. All night parties in disguise were perambulating the different wards, watching each other's tactics; masks, wigs, false noses, gentles in livery coats, men in female attire, a silent carnival of manœuvre, vigilance, anxiety, and trepidation. The thoughtful voters about this time make up their minds; the enthusiasts who have told you twenty times a-day for the last fortnight, that they would get up in the middle of the night to serve you, require the most watchful cooping; all the individuals who have assured you that 'their word is their bond,' change sides.

Two of the Rigbyites met in the market-place about an hour after midnight.

'Well, how goes it?' said one.

'I have been the rounds. The blunt's going like the ward-pump. I saw a man come out of Moffatt's house, muffled up with a mask on. I dodged him. It was Biggs.'

'You don't mean that, do you? D—e, I'll answer for Moffatt.'

'I never thought he was a true man.'

'Told Robins?'

'I could not see him, but I met young Gunning and told him.'

'Young Gunning! That won't do.'

'I thought he was as right as the town clock.'

'So did I, once. Hush! who comes here? The enemy, Franklin and Sampson Potts. Keep close.'

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'I'll speak to them. Good night, Potts. Up rather late to-night?'

'All fair election time. You ain't snoring, are you?'

'Well, I hope the best man will win.'

'I am sure he will.'

'You must go for Moffatt early, to breakfast at the White Lion; that's your sort. Don't leave him, and poll him yourself. I am going off to Solomon Lacey's. He has got four Millbankites cooped up very drunk, and I want to get them quietly into the country before daybreak.'

'Tis polling day! The candidates are roused from their slumbers at an early hour by the music of their own bands perambulating the town, and each playing the 'conquering hero' to sustain the courage of their jaded employers, by depriving them of that rest which can alone tranquillise the nervous system. There is something in that matin burst of music, followed by a shrill cheer from the boys of the borough, the only inhabitants yet up, that is very depressing.

The committee-rooms of each candidate are soon rife with black reports; each side has received fearful bulletins of the preceding night's campaign; and its consequences as exemplified in the morning, unprecedented tergiversations, mysterious absences; men who breakfast with one side and vote with the other; men who won't come to breakfast; men who won't leave breakfast.

At ten o'clock Mr. Rigby was in a majority of twenty-eight.

The polling was brisk and equal until the middle of the day, when it became slack. Mr. Rigby kept a majority, but an inconsiderable one. Mr. Millbank's

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friends were not disheartened, as it was known that the leading members of Mr. Rigby's committee had polled; whereas his opponent's were principally reserved. At a quarter-past two there was great cheering and uproar. The four votes in favour of Millbank, whom Solomon Lacey had cooped up, made drunk, and carried into the country, had recovered their senses, made their escape, and voted as they originally intended. Soon after this, Mr. Millbank was declared by his committee to be in a majority of one, but the committee of Mr. Rigby instantly posted a placard, in large letters, to announce that, on the contrary, their man was in a majority of nine.

'If we could only have got another registration,' whispered the principal agent to Mr. Rigby, at a quarter-past four.

'You think it's all over then?'

'Why, I do not see now how we can win. We have polled all our dead men, and Millbank is seven a-head.'

'I have no doubt we shall be able to have a good petition,' said the consoling chairman of the Conservative Association.

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CHAPTER XLIII.

LORD MONMOUTH ASTONISHES RIGBY.

IT WAS not with feelings of extreme satisfaction that Mr. Rigby returned to London. The loss of Hellingsley, followed by the loss of the borough to Hellingsley's successful master, were not precisely the incidents which would be adduced as evidence of Mr. Rigby's good management or good fortune. Hitherto that gentleman had persuaded the world that he was not only very clever, but that he was also always in luck; a quality which many appreciate more even than capacity. His reputation was unquestionably damaged, both with his patron and his party. But what the Tapers and the Tadpoles thought or said, what even might be the injurious effect on his own career of the loss of this election, assumed an insignificant character when compared with its influence on the temper and disposition of the Marquess of Monmouth.

And yet his carriage is now entering the courtyard of Monmouth House, and, in all probability, a few minutes would introduce him to that presence

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before which he had, ere this, trembled. The Marquess was at home, and anxious to see Mr. Rigby. In a few minutes that gentleman was ascending the private staircase, entering the antechamber, and waiting to be received in the little saloon, exactly as our Coningsby did more than five years ago, scarcely less agitated, but by feelings of a very different character.

'Well, you made a good fight of it,' exclaimed the Marquess, in a cheerful and cordial tone, as Mr. Rigby entered his dressing-room. 'Patience! We shall win next time.'

This reception instantly reassured the defeated candidate, though its contrast to that which he expected rather perplexed him. He entered into the details of the election, talked rapidly of the next registration, the propriety of petitioning; accustomed himself to hearing his voice with its habitual volubility in a chamber where he had feared it might not sound for some time.

'D—n politics!' said the Marquess. 'These fellows are in for this Parliament, and I am really weary of the whole affair. I begin to think the Duke was right, and it would have been best to have left them to themselves. I am glad you have come up at once, for I want you. The fact is, I am going to be married.'

This was not a startling announcement to Mr. Rigby; he was prepared for it, though scarcely could have hoped that he would have been favoured with it on the present occasion, instead of a morose comment on his misfortunes. Marriage, then, was the predominant idea of Lord Monmouth at the present moment, in whose absorbing interest all vexations were forgotten. Fortunate Rigby! Disgusted by the

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failure of his political combinations, his disappointments in not dictating to the county and not carrying the borough, and the slight prospect at present of obtaining the great object of his ambition, Lord Monmouth had resolved to precipitate his fate, was about to marry immediately, and quit England.

'You will be wanted, Rigby,' continued the Marquess. 'We must have a couple of trustees, and I have thought of you as one. You know you are my executor; and it is better not to bring in unnecessarily new names into the management of my affairs. Lord Eskdale will act with you.'

Rigby then, after all, was a lucky man. After such a succession of failures, he had returned only to receive fresh and the most delicate marks of his patron's good feeling and consideration. Lord Monmouth's trustee and executor! 'You know you are my executor.' Sublime truth! It ought to be blazoned in letters of gold in the most conspicuous part of Rigby's library, to remind him perpetually of his great and impending destiny. Lord Monmouth's executor, and very probably one of his residuary legatees! A legatee of some sort he knew he was. What a splendid *memento mori!* What cared Rigby for the borough of Darlford? And as for his political friends, he wished them joy of their barren benches. Nothing was lost by not being in this Parliament.

It was then with sincerity that Rigby offered his congratulations to his patron. He praised the judicious alliance, accompanied by every circumstance conducive to wordly happiness; distinguished beauty, perfect temper, princely rank. Rigby, who had hardly got out of his hustings' vein, was most eloquent in his praises of Madame Colonna.

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'An amiable woman,' said Lord Monmouth, 'and very handsome. I always admired her; and an agreeable person too; I dare say a very good temper, but I am not going to marry her.'

'Might I then ask who is——'

'Her step-daughter, the Princess Lucretia,' replied the Marquess, quietly, and looking at his ring.

Here was a thunderbolt! Rigby had made another mistake. He had been working all this time for the wrong woman! The consciousness of being a trustee alone sustained him. There was an inevitable pause. The Marquess would not speak however and Rigby must. He babbled rather incoherently about the Princess Lucretia being admired by everybody; also that she was the most fortunate of women, as well as the most accomplished; he was just beginning to say he had known her from a child, when discretion stopped his tongue, which had a habit of running on somewhat rashly; but Rigby, though he often blundered in his talk, had the talent of extricating himself from the consequence of his mistakes.

'And Madame must be highly gratified by all this?' observed Mr. Rigby, with an enquiring accent. He was dying to learn how she had first received the intelligence, and congratulated himself that his absence at his contest had preserved him from the storm.

'Madame Colonna knows nothing of our intentions,' said Lord Monmouth. 'And by-the-bye, that is the very business on which I wish to see you, Rigby. I wish you to communicate them to her. We are to be married, and immediately. It would gratify me that the wife of Lucretia's father should attend our wedding. You understand exactly what I

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mean, Rigby; I must have no scenes. Always happy to see the Princess Colonna under my roof: but then I like to live quietly, particularly at present; harassed as I have been by the loss of these elections, by all this bad management, and by all these disappointments on subjects in which I was led to believe success was certain. Madame Colonna is at home;' and the Marquess bowed Mr. Rigby out of the room.

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CHAPTER XLIV.

A 'Scene' and a Wedding.

HE departure of Sidonia from Coningsby Castle, in the autumn, determined the Princess Lucretia on a step which had for some time before his arrival occupied her brooding imagination. Nature had bestowed on this lady an ambitious soul and a subtle spirit; she could dare much and could execute finely. Above all things she coveted power; and though not free from the characteristic susceptibility of her sex, the qualities that could engage her passions or fascinate her fancy must partake of that intellectual eminence which distinguished her. Though the Princess Lucretia in a short space of time had seen much of the world, she had as yet encountered no hero. In the admirers whom her rank, and sometimes her intelligence, assembled around her, her master had not yet appeared. Her heart had not trembled before any of those brilliant forms whom she was told her sex admired; nor did she envy any one the homage which she did not appreciate. There was, therefore, no disturbing element in the worldly calculations which she

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applied to that question which is, to woman, what a career is to man, the question of marriage. She would marry to gain power, and therefore she wished to marry the powerful. Lord Eskdale hovered around her, and she liked him. She admired his incomparable shrewdness; his freedom from ordinary prejudices; his selfishness which was always good-natured, and the imperturbability that was not callous. But Lord Eskdale had hovered around many; it was his easy habit. He liked clever women, young, but who had seen something of the world. The Princess Lucretia pleased him much; with the form and mind of a woman even in the nursery. He had watched her development with interest; and had witnessed her launched in that world where she floated at once with as much dignity and consciousness of superior power as if she had braved for seasons its waves and its tempests.

Musing over Lord Eskdale, the mind of Lucretia was drawn to the image of his friend; her friend; the friend of her parents. And why not marry Lord Monmouth? The idea pleased her. There was something great in the conception; difficult and strange. The result, if achieved, would give her all that she desired. She devoted her mind to this secret thought. She had no confidants. She concentrated her intellect on one point, and that was to fascinate the grandfather of Coningsby, while her step-mother was plotting that she should marry his grandson. The volition of Lucretia Colonna was, if not supreme, of a power most difficult to resist. There was something charm-like and alluring in the conversation of one who was silent to all others; something in the tones of her low rich voice which acted singularly on the

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nervous system. It was the voice of the serpent; indeed, there was an undulating movement in Lucretia, when she approached you, which irresistibly reminded you of that mysterious animal.

Lord Monmouth was not insensible to the spell, though totally unconscious of its purpose. He found the society of Lucretia very agreeable to him; she was animated, intelligent, original; her inquiries were stimulating; her comments on what she saw, and heard, and read, racy and often indicating a fine humour. But all this was reserved for his ear. Before her parents, as before all others, Lucretia was silent, a little scornful, never communicating, neither giving nor seeking amusement, shut up in herself.

Lord Monmouth fell therefore into the habit of riding and driving with Lucretia alone. It was an arrangement which he found made his life more pleasant. Nor was it displeasing to Madame Colonna. She looked upon Lord Monmouth's fancy for Lucretia as a fresh tie for them all. Even the Prince, when his wife called his attention to the circumstance, observed it with satisfaction. It was a circumstance which represented in his mind a continuance of good eating and good drinking, fine horses, luxurious baths, unceasing billiards.

In this state of affairs appeared Sidonia, known before to her step-mother, but seen by Lucretia for the first time. Truly, he came, saw, and conquered. Those eyes that rarely met another's were fixed upon his searching yet unimpassioned glance. She listened to that voice, full of music yet void of tenderness; and the spirit of Lucretia Colonna bowed before an intelligence that commanded sympathy, yet offered none.

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Lucretia naturally possessed great qualities as well as great talents. Under a genial influence, her education might have formed a being capable of imparting and receiving happiness. But she found herself without a guide. Her father offered her no love; her step-mother gained from her no respect. Her literary education was the result of her own strong mind and inquisitive spirit. She valued knowledge, and she therefore acquired it. But not a single moral principle or a single religious truth had ever been instilled into her being. Frequent absence from her own country had by degrees broken off even an habitual observance of the forms of her creed; while a life of undisturbed indulgence, void of all anxiety and care, while it preserved her from many of the temptations to vice, deprived her of that wisdom 'more precious than rubies,' which adversity and affliction, the struggles and the sorrows of existence, can alone impart.

Lucretia had passed her life in a refined, but rather dissolute, society. Not indeed that a word that could call forth a maiden blush, conduct that could pain the purest feelings, could be heard or witnessed in those polished and luxurious circles. The most exquisite taste pervaded their atmosphere; and the uninitiated who found themselves in those perfumed chambers and those golden saloons, might believe, from all that passed before them, that their inhabitants were as pure, as orderly, and as irreproachable as their furniture. But among the habitual dwellers in these delicate halls there was a tacit understanding, a prevalent doctrine that required no formal exposition, no proofs and illustrations, no comment and no gloss; which was indeed rather a traditional conviction than an imparted dogma; that the exoteric public

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were, on many subjects, the victims of very vulgar prejudices, which these enlightened personages wished neither to disturb nor to adopt.

A being of such a temper bred in such a manner; a woman full of intellect and ambition, daring and lawless, and satiated with prosperity, is not made for equable fortunes and an uniform existence. She would have sacrificed the world for Sidonia, for he had touched the fervent imagination that none before could approach; but that inscrutable man would not read the secret of her heart; and prompted alike by pique, the love of power, and a weariness of her present life, Lucretia resolved on that great result which Mr. Rigby is now about to communicate to the Princess Colonna.

About half-an-hour after Mr. Rigby had entered that lady's apartments it seemed that all the bells of Monmouth House were ringing at the same time. The sound even reached the Marquess in his luxurious recess; who immediately took a pinch of snuff, and ordered his valet to lock the door of the antechamber. The Princess Lucretia, too, heard the sounds; she was lying on a sofa, in her boudoir, reading the *Inferno,* and immediately mustered her garrison in the form of a French maid, and gave directions that no one should be admitted. Both the Marquess and his intended bride felt that a crisis was at hand, and resolved to participate in no scenes.

The ringing ceased; there was again silence. Then there was another ring; a short, hasty, and violent pull; followed by some slamming of doors. The servants, who were all on the alert, and had advantages of hearing and observation denied to their secluded master, caught a glimpse of Mr. Rigby en-

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deavouring gently to draw back into her apartments Madame Colonna, furious amid his deprecatory exclamations:

'For heaven's sake, my dear Madame; for your own sake; now really; now I assure you; you are quite wrong; you are indeed; it is a complete misapprehension; I will explain everything. I entreat, I implore, whatever you like, just what you please; only listen.'

Then the lady, with a mantling visage and flashing eye, violently closing the door, was again lost to their sight. A few minutes after there was a moderate ring, and Mr. Rigby, coming out of the apartments, with his cravat a little out of order, as if he had had a violent shaking, met the servant who would have entered.

'Order Madame Colonna's travelling carriage,' he exclaimed in a loud voice, 'and send Mademoiselle Conrad here directly. I don't think the fellow hears me,' added Mr. Rigby, and following the servant, he added in a low tone and with a significant glance, 'No travelling carriage; no Mademoiselle Conrad; order the britska round as usual.'

Nearly another hour passed; there was another ring; very moderate indeed. The servant was informed that Madame Colonna was coming down, and she appeared as usual. In a beautiful morning dress, and leaning on the arm of Mr. Rigby, she descended the stairs, and was handed into her carriage by that gentleman, who, seating himself by her side, ordered them to drive to Richmond.

Lord Monmouth having been informed that all was calm, and that Madame Colonna, attended by Mr. Rigby, had gone to Richmond, ordered his carriage,

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and accompanied by Lucretia and Lucian Gay, departed immediately for Blackwall, where, in whitebait, a quiet bottle of claret, the society of his agreeable friends, and the contemplation of the passing steamers, he found a mild distraction and an amusing repose.

Mr. Rigby reported that evening to the Marquess on his return, that all was arranged and tranquil. Perhaps he exaggerated the difficulties, to increase the service; but according to his account they were considerable. It required some time to make Madame Colonna comprehend the nature of his communication. All Rigby's diplomatic skill was expended in the gradual development. When it was once fairly put before her, the effect was appalling. That was the first great ringing of bells. Rigby softened a little what he had personally endured; but he confessed she sprang at him like a tigress balked of her prey, and poured forth on him a volume of epithets, many of which Rigby really deserved. But after all, in the present instance, he was not treacherous, only base, which he always was. Then she fell into a passion of tears, and vowed frequently that she was not weeping for herself, but only for that dear Mr. Coningsby, who had been treated so infamously and robbed of Lucretia, and whose heart she knew must break. It seemed that Rigby stemmed the first violence of her emotion by mysterious intimations of an important communication that he had to make; and piquing her curiosity, he calmed her passion. But really having nothing to say, he was nearly involved in fresh dangers. He took refuge in the affectation of great agitation which prevented exposition. The lady then insisted on her travelling carriage being ordered and

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packed, as she was determined to set out for Rome that afternoon. This little occurrence gave Rigby some few minutes to collect himself, at the end of which he made the Princess several announcements of intended arrangements, all of which pleased her mightily, though they were so inconsistent with each other that if she had not been a woman in a passion, she must have detected that Rigby was lying. He assured her almost in the same breath, that she was never to be separated from them, and that she was to have any establishment in any country she liked. He talked wildly of equipages, diamonds, shawls, opera-boxes; and while her mind was bewildered with these dazzling objects, he, with intrepid gravity, consulted her as to the exact amount she would like to have apportioned, independent of her general revenue, for the purposes of charity.

At the end of two hours, exhausted by her rage and soothed by these visions, Madame Colonna having grown calm and reasonable, sighed and murmured a complaint that Lord Monmouth ought to have communicated this important intelligence in person. Upon this Rigby instantly assured her that Lord Monmouth had been for some time waiting to do so, but in consequence of her lengthened interview with Rigby, his Lordship had departed for Richmond with Lucretia, where he hoped that Madame Colonna and Mr. Rigby would join him. So it ended, with a morning drive and suburban dinner; Rigby, after what he had gone through, finding no difficulty in accounting for the other guests not being present, and bringing home Madame Colonna in the evening, at times almost as gay and good-tempered as usual, and almost oblivious of her disappointment.

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When the Marquess met Madame Colonna he embraced her with great courtliness, and from that time consulted her on every arrangement. He took a very early occasion of presenting her with a diamond necklace of great value. The Marquess was fond of making presents to persons to whom he thought he had not behaved very well, and who yet spared him scenes.

The marriage speedily followed, by special license, at the villa of the Right Hon. Nicholas Rigby, who gave away the bride. The wedding was very select, but brilliant as the diamond necklace: a royal Duke and Duchess, Lady St. Julians, and a few others. Mr. Ormsby presented the bride with a bouquet of precious stones, and Lord Eskdale gave a French fan in a diamond frame. It was a fine day; Lord Monmouth, calm as if he were winning the St. Leger; Lucretia, universally recognised as a beauty; all the guests gay, the Princess Colonna especially.

The travelling carriage is at the door which is to bear away the happy pair. Madame Colonna embraces Lucretia; the Marquess gives a grand bow: they are gone. The guests remain a while. A Prince of the blood will propose a toast; there is another glass of champagne quaffed, another ortolan devoured; and then they rise and disperse. Madame Colonna leaves with Lady St. Julians, whose guest for a while she is to become. And in a few minutes their host is alone.

Mr. Rigby retired into his library: the repose of the chamber must have been grateful to his feelings after all this distraction. It was spacious, well-stored, classically adorned, and opened on a beautiful lawn. Rigby threw himself into an ample chair, crossed his

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legs, and resting his head on his arm, apparently fell into deep contemplation.

He had some cause for reflection, and though we did once venture to affirm that Rigby never either thought or felt, this perhaps may be the exception that proves the rule.

He could scarcely refrain from pondering over the strange event which he had witnessed, and at which he had assisted.

It was an incident that might exercise considerable influence over his fortunes. His patron married, and married to one who certainly did not offer to Mr. Rigby such a prospect of easy management as her step-mother! Here were new influences arising; new characters, new situations, new contingencies. Was he thinking of all this? He suddenly jumps up, hurries to a shelf and takes down a volume. It is his interleaved peerage, of which for twenty years he had been threatening an edition. Turning to the Marquisate of Monmouth, he took up his pen and thus made the necessary entry:

'*Married, second time, August 3rd,* 1837, *The Princess Lucretia Colonna, daughter of Prince Paul Colonna, born at Rome, February 16th,* 1819.'

That was what Mr. Rigby called 'a great fact.' There was not a peerage-compiler in England who had that date save himself.

Before we close this slight narrative of the domestic incidents that occurred in the family of his grandfather since Coningsby quitted the Castle, we must not forget to mention what happened to Villebecque and Flora. Lord Monmouth took a great

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liking to the manager. He found him very clever in many things independently of his profession; he was useful to Lord Monmouth, and did his work in an agreeable manner. And the future Lady Monmouth was accustomed to Flora, and found her useful too, and did not like to lose her. And so the Marquess, turning all the circumstances in his mind, and being convinced that Villebecque could never succeed to any extent in England in his profession, and probably nowhere else, appointed him, to Villebecque's infinite satisfaction, intendant of his household, with a considerable salary, while Flora still lived with her kind step-father.

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CHAPTER XLV.

An Intercepted Letter.

ANOTHER year elapsed; not so fruitful in incidents to Coningsby as the preceding ones, and yet not unprofitably passed. It had been spent in the almost unremitting cultivation of his intelligence. He had read deeply and extensively, digested his acquisitions, and had practised himself in surveying them, free from those conventional conclusions and those traditionary inferences that surrounded him. Although he had renounced his once cherished purpose of trying for university honours, an aim which he found discordant with the investigations on which his mind was bent, he had rarely quitted Cambridge. The society of his friends, the great convenience of public libraries, and the general tone of studious life around, rendered an university for him a genial residence. There is a moment in life when the pride and thirst of knowledge seem to absorb our being, and so it happened now to Coningsby, who felt each day stronger in his intellectual resources, and each day more anxious and avid to increase them. The habits of public discussion fostered by the Debating Society were also for

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Coningsby no inconsiderable tie to the university. This was the arena in which he felt himself at home. The promise of his Eton days was here fulfilled. And while his friends listened to his sustained argument or his impassioned declamation, the prompt reply or the apt retort, they looked forward with pride through the vista of years to the time when the hero of the youthful club should convince or dazzle in the senate. It is probable then that he would have remained at Cambridge with slight intervals until he had taken his degree, had not circumstances occurred which gave altogether a new turn to his thoughts.

When Lord Monmouth had fixed his wedding-day he had written himself to Coningsby to announce his intended marriage, and to request his grandson's presence at the ceremony. The letter was more than kind; it was warm and generous. He assured his grandson that this alliance should make no difference in the very ample provision which he had long intended for him; that he should ever esteem Coningsby his nearest relative; and that, while his death would bring to Coningsby as considerable an independence as an English gentleman need desire, so in his lifetime Coningsby should ever be supported as became his birth, breeding, and future prospects. Lord Monmouth had mentioned to Lucretia that he was about to invite his grandson to their wedding, and the lady had received the intimation with satisfaction. It so happened that a few hours after, Lucretia, who now entered the private rooms of Lord Monmouth without previously announcing her arrival, met Villebecque with the letter to Coningsby in his hand. Lucretia took it away from him, and said it should be posted

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with her own letters. It never reached its destination. Our friend learnt the marriage from the newspapers, which somewhat astounded him; but Coningsby was fond of his grandfather, and he wrote Lord Monmouth a letter of congratulation, full of feeling and ingenuousness, and which, while it much pleased the person to whom it was addressed, unintentionally convinced him that Coningsby had never received his original communication. Lord Monmouth spoke to Villebecque, who could throw sufficient light upon the subject, but it was never mentioned to Lady Monmouth. The Marquess was a man who always found out everything, and enjoyed the secret.

Rather more than a year after the marriage, when Coningsby had completed his twenty-first year, the year which he had passed so quietly at Cambridge, he received a letter from his grandfather, informing him that after a variety of movements Lady Monmouth and himself were established in Paris for the season, and desiring that he would not fail to come over as soon as practicable, and pay them as long a visit as the regulations of the university would permit. So, at the close of the December term, Coningsby quitted Cambridge for Paris.

Passing through London, he made his first visit to his banker at Charing Cross, on whom he had periodically drawn since he commenced his college life. He was in the outer counting-house, making some inquiries about a letter of credit, when one of the partners came out from an inner room, and invited him to enter. This firm had been for generations the bankers of the Coningsby family; and it appeared that there was a sealed box in their possession, which had belonged to the father of Coningsby, and they wished

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to take this opportunity of delivering it to his son. This communication deeply interested him; and as he was alone in London, at an hotel, and on the wing for a foreign country, he requested permission at once to examine it, in order that he might again deposit it with them: so he was shown into a private room for that purpose. The seal was broken; the box was full of papers, chiefly correspondence: among them was a packet described as letters from 'my dear Helen,' the mother of Coningsby. In the interior of this packet there was a miniature of that mother. He looked at it; put it down; looked at it again and again. He could not be mistaken. There was the same blue fillet in the bright hair. It was an exact copy of that portrait which had so greatly excited his attention when at Millbank! This was a mysterious and singularly perplexing incident. It greatly agitated him. He was alone in the room when he made the discovery. When he had recovered himself, he sealed up the contents of the box, with the exception of his mother's letters and the miniature, which he took away with him, and then re-delivered it to his banker for custody until his return.

Coningsby found Lord and Lady Monmouth in a splendid hotel in the Faubourg St. Honoré, near the English Embassy. His grandfather looked at him with marked attention, and received him with evident satisfaction. Indeed, Lord Monmouth was greatly pleased that Harry had come to Paris; it was the university of the world, where everybody should graduate. Paris and London ought to be the great objects of all travellers; the rest was mere landscape.

It cannot be denied that between Lucretia and Coningsby there existed from the first a certain antip-

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AFTER AN ORIGINAL DRAWING BY HERMAN ROUNTREE.

There was the same blue fillet in the bright hair. It was an exact copy of that portrait which had so greatly excited his attention when at Millbank.

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athy; and though circumstances for a short time had apparently removed or modified the aversion, the manner of the lady when Coningsby was ushered into her boudoir, resplendent with all that Parisian taste and luxury could devise, was characterised by that frigid politeness which had preceded the days of their more genial acquaintance. If the manner of Lucretia were the same as before her marriage, a considerable change might however be observed in her appearance. Her fine form had become more developed; while her dress, that she once neglected, was elaborate and gorgeous, and of the last mode. Lucretia was the fashion at Paris; a great lady, greatly admired. A guest under such a roof, however, Coningsby was at once launched into the most brilliant circles of Parisian society, which he found fascinating.

The art of society is, without doubt, perfectly comprehended and completely practised in the bright metropolis of France. An Englishman cannot enter a saloon without instantly feeling he is among a race more social than his compatriots. What, for example, is more consummate than the manner in which a French lady receives her guests! She unites graceful repose and unaffected dignity, with the most amiable regard for others. She sees every one; she speaks to every one; she sees them at the right moment; she says the right thing; it is utterly impossible to detect any difference in the position of her guests by the spirit in which she welcomes them. There is, indeed, throughout every circle of Parisian society, from the *château* to the *cabaret,* a sincere homage to intellect; and this without any maudlin sentiment. None sooner than the Parisians can draw the line be-

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tween factitious notoriety and honest fame; or sooner distinguish between the counterfeit celebrity and the standard reputation. In England, we too often alternate between a supercilious neglect of genius and a rhapsodical pursuit of quacks. In England when a new character appears in our circles, the first question always is, 'Who is he?' In France, it is, 'What is he?' In England, 'How much a year?' In France, 'What has he done?'

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CHAPTER XLVI.

'Fairer Than the Pictured Forms.'

BOUT a week after Coningsby's arrival in Paris, as he was sauntering on the soft and sunny boulevards, soft and sunny though Christmas, he met Sidonia.

'So you are here?' said Sidonia. 'Turn now with me, for I see you are only lounging, and tell me when you came, where you are, and what you have done since we parted. I have been here myself but a few days.'

There was much to tell. And when Coningsby had rapidly related all that had passed, they talked of Paris. Sidonia had offered him hospitality, until he learned that Lord Monmouth was in Paris, and that Coningsby was his guest.

'I am sorry you cannot come to me,' he remarked; 'I would have shown you everybody and everything. But we shall meet often.'

'I have already seen many remarkable things,' said Coningsby; 'and met many celebrated persons. Nothing strikes me more in this brilliant city than the tone of its society, so much higher than our own. What an absence of petty personalities! How much

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conversation, and how little gossip! Yet nowhere is there less pedantry. Here all women are as agreeable as is the remarkable privilege in London of some half-dozen. Men too, and great men, develop their minds. A great man in England, on the contrary, is generally the dullest dog in company. And yet, how piteous to think that so fair a civilisation should be in such imminent peril!'

'Yes! that is a common opinion; and yet I am somewhat sceptical of its truth,' replied Sidonia. 'I am inclined to believe that the social system of England is in infinitely greater danger than that of France. We must not be misled by the agitated surface of this country. The foundations of its order are deep and sure. Learn to understand France. France is a kingdom with a republic for its capital. It has been always so, for centuries. From the days of the League to the days of the Sections, to the days of 1830. It is still France, little changed; and only more national, for it is less Frank and more Gallic; as England has become less Norman and more Saxon.'

'And it is your opinion, then, that the present King may maintain himself?'

'Every movement in this country, however apparently discordant, seems to tend to that inevitable end. He would not be on the throne if the nature of things had not demanded his presence. The kingdom of France required a monarch; the republic of Paris required a dictator. He comprised in his person both qualifications; lineage and intellect; blood for the provinces, brains for the city.'

'What a position! what an individual!' exclaimed Coningsby. 'Tell me,' he added, eagerly, 'what is he? This Prince of whom one hears in all countries

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at all hours; on whose existence we are told the tranquillity, almost the civilisation, of Europe depends, yet of whom we receive accounts so conflicting, so contradictory; tell me, you who can tell me, tell me what he is?'

Sidonia smiled at his earnestness. 'I have a creed of mine own,' he remarked, 'that the great characters of antiquity are at rare epochs reproduced for our wonder, or our guidance. Nature, wearied with mediocrity, pours the warm metal into an heroic mould. When circumstances at length placed me in the presence of the King of France, I recognised — Ulysses!'

'But is there no danger,' resumed Coningsby, after the pause of a few moments, 'that the republic of Paris may absorb the kingdom of France?'

'I suspect the reverse,' replied Sidonia. 'The tendency of advanced civilisation is in truth to pure monarchy. Monarchy is indeed a government which requires a high degree of civilisation for its full development. It needs the support of free laws and manners, and of a widely-diffused intelligence. Political compromises are not to be tolerated except at periods of rude transition. An educated nation recoils from the imperfect vicariate of what is called a representative government. Your House of Commons, that has absorbed all other powers in the State, will in all probability fall more rapidly than it rose. Public opinion has a more direct, a more comprehensive, a more efficient organ for its utterance, than a body of men sectionally chosen. The printing-press is a political element unknown to classic or feudal times. It absorbs in a great degree the duties of the sovereign, the priest, the parliament; it controls, it educates, it discusses. That public opinion, when it acts,

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would appear in the form of one who has no class interests. In an enlightened age the monarch on the throne, free from the vulgar prejudices and the corrupt interests of the subject, becomes again divine!'

At this moment they reached that part of the boulevards which leads into the Place of the Madeleine, whither Sidonia was bound; and Coningsby was about to quit his companion, when Sidonia said:

'I am only going to step over to the Rue Tronchet to say a few words to a friend of mine, M. P——s. I shall not detain you five minutes; and you should know him, for he has some capital pictures, and a collection of Limoges ware that is the despair of the dilettanti.'

So saying they turned down by the Place of the Madeleine, and soon entered the court of the hotel of M. P——s. That gentleman received them in his gallery. After some general conversation, Coningsby turned towards the pictures, and left Sidonia with their host. The collection was rare, and interested Coningsby, though unacquainted with art. He sauntered on from picture to picture until he reached the end of the gallery, where an open door invited him into a suite of rooms also full of pictures and objects of curiosity and art. As he was entering a second chamber, he observed a lady leaning back in a cushioned chair, and looking earnestly on a picture. His entrance was unheard and unnoticed, for the lady's back was to the door; yet Coningsby, advancing in an angular direction, obtained nearly a complete view of her countenance. It was upraised, gazing on the picture with an expression of delight; the bonnet thrown back, while the large sable cloak of the gazer had fallen partly off. The countenance was more

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beautiful than the beautiful picture. Those glowing shades of the gallery to which love, and genius, and devotion had lent their inspiration, seemed without life and lustre by the radiant and expressive presence which Coningsby now beheld.

The finely-arched brow was a little elevated, the soft dark eyes were fully opened, the nostril of the delicate nose slightly dilated, the small, yet rich, full lips just parted; and over the clear, transparent visage, there played a vivid glance of gratified intelligence.

The lady rose, advanced towards the picture, looked at it earnestly for a few moments, and then, turning in a direction opposite to Coningsby, walked away. She was somewhat above the middle stature, and yet could scarcely be called tall; a quality so rare, that even skilful dancers do not often possess it, was hers — that elastic gait which is so winning, and so often denotes the gaiety and quickness of the spirit.

The fair object of his observation had advanced into other chambers, and as soon as it was becoming, Coningsby followed her. She had joined a lady and gentleman, who were examining an ancient carving in ivory. The gentleman was middle-aged and portly; the elder lady tall and elegant, and with traces of interesting beauty. Coningsby heard her speak; the words were English. but the accent not of a native.

In the remotest part of the room, Coningsby, apparently engaged in examining some of that famous Limoges ware of which Sidonia had spoken, watched with interest and intentness the beautiful being whom he had followed, and whom he concluded to be the child of her companions. After some little time, they quitted the apartment on their return to the gallery; Coningsby remained behind, caring for none of the

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rare and fanciful objects that surrounded him, yet compelled, from the fear of seeming obtrusive, for some minutes to remain. Then he too returned to the gallery, and just as he had gained its end, he saw the portly gentleman in the distance shaking hands with Sidonia, the ladies apparently expressing their thanks and gratification to M. P——s, and then all vanishing by the door through which Coningsby had originally entered.

'What a beautiful countrywoman of yours!' said M. P——s, as Coningsby approached him.

'Is she my countrywoman? I am glad to hear it; I have been admiring her,' he replied.

'Yes,' said M. P——s, 'it is Sir Wallinger: one of your deputies; don't you know him?'

'Sir Wallinger!' said Coningsby, 'no, I have not that honour.' He looked at Sidonia.

'Sir Joseph Wallinger,' said Sidonia, 'one of the new Whig baronets, and member for ——. I know him. He married a Spaniard. That is not his daughter, but his niece; the child of his wife's sister. It is not easy to find any one more beautiful.'

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